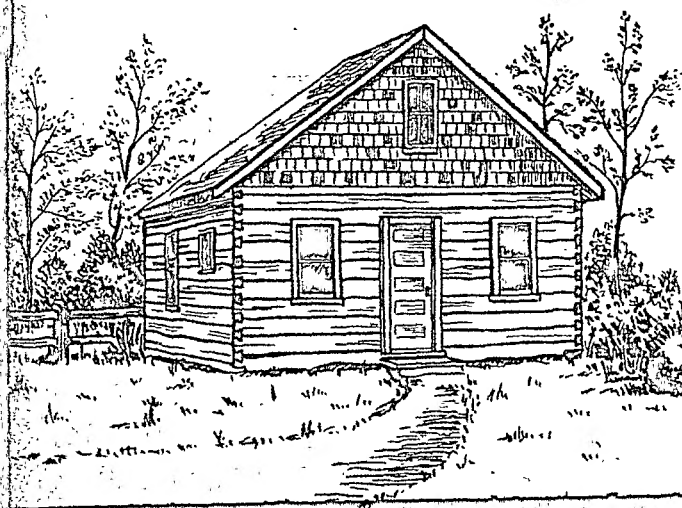


# HOMESTEADING *for* GOD



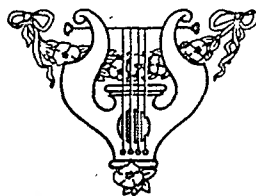
A NARRATIVE HISTORY  
OF LUTHERAN MISSION  
WORK IN ALBERTA AND  
BRITISH COLUMBIA  
1894-1946

Gift of

Offert par

Concordia College  
Edmonton, Alberta

# HOMESTEADING FOR GOD



A STORY OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH  
(MISSOURI SYNOD)

IN

ALBERTA AND BRITISH COLUMBIA

1894 - 1946

To the memory of the pioneers and missionaries  
who planted,

To our brethren south of the border  
who watered,

And to the glory of God who gave  
the increase

This story is gratefully told.

This is not a history, or a glorification of the deeds of men, it is HIS STORY, a simple unadorned account of what the Lord has done for His Church in the Canadian Northwest. It is not man's story and therefore many of the deeds and sacrifices of faithful labourers for the Lord will be missed. It is rather an attempt to trace the footsteps of the Lord as He passed down the corridors of time and to note the paths of blessing along which the Lord had led His children through all their mistakes, faintheartedness and reverses to the glorious results which today, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Alberta and British Columbia District, lie open before our wondering eyes.

EDMONTON, ALTA.

JUNE 1, 1946.

JOHN E. HERZER,

*Died Dec. 1954*



## CHAPTER 1

### SO IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD

"So is the kingdom of God as if a man would cast seed into the ground and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow he knoweth not how." Mark 4: 26,27. Thus did Jesus, the Lord of the Church, in simple words taken from the life and experience of His hearers describe His church, a church so insignificant in its beginning, so mysterious and irresistible in its growth, but so glorious in its consummation. "And with many such parables spake He the word unto them as they were able to hear," reports the holy writer and causes us to wonder what parables our dear Master, had He lived in the Canadian West, would have used to bring similar truths home to us. Might one not suppose, speaking reverently, that adapting Himself to the conditions of the life of Western hearers, Jesus might have said: "So is the Kingdom of God, as if a man should take up a homestead and having cleared a part and built a log hut, he breaks more and more ground until he has his whole place in crop, 'proved up' and established his home." At any rate we may well adopt this figure of speech as descriptive of the beginning and the development of our work in Alberta and British Columbia.

### FILING ON THE HOMESTEAD

(1879 - 1894)

When the West was opened to settlement hordes of settlers from the United States and countries beyond the seas flooded Western Canada in search of free fertile land. They studied maps, besieged land offices, drove over limitless prairie and park lands, to find a desirable location for their future farm home. "So is the kingdom of God." However, the church instead of going out to find opportunities for the extension of God's dominion, must often be led by God to its field of labor. It was thus in Western Canada. God Himself shaped the events so that our church was forced to take up a homestead and possess the land which otherwise might have lain fallow had not the Lord opened a way for it. It happened thus.

One day early in 1879 a letter came to the Rev. C. Strassen of Watertown, Wisconsin, the president of the North-Western District of the Missouri Synod. Neither the writer nor the place of posting was known to Rev. Strassen. The letter was written by a certain

Mr. Wagner of Ossowo or Town Berlin, Manitoba. In it the writer, a Canadian government surveyor, informed President Strassen that a number of Lutheran families from Ontario had settled in the Red River Valley west of Winnipeg and were anxious to have the services of a Lutheran pastor. How the writer had secured the address was not stated, but who could fail to see the Hand of God in this call. President Strassen immediately dispatched the request to the Rev. F. Sievers of St. Paul, Minnesota, who delegated Pastor E. Rolf of the same city to visit the settlement, minister to the people, and make arrangements for future service. Late in the fall of 1879 Pastor Rolf travelled to Winnipeg, then sixty miles west and guided by Mr. Wagner visited the people. He advised them that they should appeal to Pastor A. Krueger of Elizabeth, Minnesota, just south of the boundary, to serve them, held services on the fourth and eleventh of April, 1880, organized a congregation and helped to issue a call for a resident pastor. This marks the entry of our church into Western Canada and the opening chapter of a stirring history on mission progress in the West. In such a providential manner was our Synod, thirty-three years after its organization in Chicago, led into the great undeveloped field of the Canadian West, and was made to open the mission which in time was to reach the shores of the Pacific and eventually Alaska. "Truly the kingdom of God is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in the field which becomes a tree." Matt. 14:13.

### ALBERTA CALLS

No less providential and unsought was the beginning of our work in Alberta. "We were indeed," reports the Board of Missions of Minnesota which carried on the work in Western Canada from 1894 to 1919, "to advance still further into the North-West. We had just received casual information from an immigrant agent of the C.P.R. that in the province of Alberta five settlements of Norwegian and German Lutherans had been established when, behold, unsolicited and unexpectedly we received letters from there calling us directly. A letter, informed us that in one place twenty-two members were anxiously awaiting the arrival of a Missouri Lutheran pastor. We therefore commissioned one of our Montana missionaries to make a tour of exploration through Alberta. His report of the journey was so favorable that it was evident a travelling missionary must be called. God willing he will take charge within a few weeks and will reside in the congregation in Hoffnungsau,



which offers to support him." The missionary called for the new field was Candidate E. Eberhardt, who was commissioned travelling missionary for Alberta on the 13th Sunday after Trinity in his home church in St. Paul by Pastor F. Sievers.



Rev. E. Eberhardt, D.D., who began his ministry at Stony Plain in 1894 and retired in 1942.

But how did it happen that a group of people appealed to the Missouri Synod of which they had never heard before and whose nearest station in Canada was a thousand miles away. Turn the calendar back a few years and try to follow the intricate thread of divine providence.

### GOD MOVES IN MYSTERIOUS WAYS

During the decade 1880-1890 when nearly one million settlers from Europe and the United States moved to Canada to establish themselves on homesteads, a large group of German Austrians also left their native land, to seek a home in the Canadian West. In 1890 these people, land hungry, sent out a delegation from Winnipeg to spy out the land and on advice of this committee settled at Dunmore near Medicine Hat. Canadian Pacific Railroad furnished them not only free transportation but also cattle and implements for which

they were to pay later. The choice of location was unfortunate since it was in the dry belt and several successive crop failures brought want and suffering. Thereupon the settlers petitioned the company again for assistance to move them to a more favorable location where they could successfully establish themselves. One group went east to Wolseley, Grenfell, and Neudorf, the other to the northern part of Alberta where they again divided into smaller sections, one of these, the Lutheran, going to the Stony Plain district where they found and settled upon some of the best farmland in Alberta. The trip to their new home and their hardship is graphically described by Prof. Rehwinkel.

"The railroad at this time was built only as far as Red Deer and there they unloaded and began their trek northward. Few of the settlers had horses, most of them drove oxen. Because of the poor roads the progress of the journey was extremely slow. There was difficulty finding water suitable for drinking. Then there were many forest fires burning along the trail, but under the Lord's protection no harm came to them. In one of the wagons even a child was born without in any way interrupting the progress of the journey. The men drove the teams and in such families, where there was only one man but two wagons, the women drove the second one. The boys and girls drove the cattle. In the evening tents were pitched, some slept in tents while others slept in wagons. Fred Goebel who was only a boy at the time recalls the difficulties the ladies had in baking bread on the trip. They would start the bread in the morning, take care of it again when they stopped for dinner, and in the evening the stove was taken from the wagon and the bread was baked.

"Near Wetaskiwin they had to lay corduroy to cross the swamp. After working hard all day and driving back and forth between various sloughs they were only a few hundred yards from the place where they started in the morning. Perfectly good stoves and heaters were sometimes thrown off the wagon and left in the swamps in order to lighten the load when the wagon mired down.

"The Saskatchewan River at Edmonton was crossed on a ferry which was operated where the 105th Street bridge has now been built. After crossing the river the party camped for several days near the little settlement of what is now the city of Edmonton. And from here a number of exploratory excursions were made into the surrounding country to find the most suitable location for the colony.

"After the surrounding country had thus been thoroughly explored, the Reformed element in the caravan decided to locate in the Beaver Hills district and most of the Lutheran Austrians de-

cided in favor of Stony Plain. There were no roads west of Edmonton at that time, only Indian trails. It was only with great difficulty that they crossed the swamp near the present Winterburn. In those days the whole district west of Edmonton was known as Stony Plain, so named after the Stony Indians, and the new settlers called the new location "Hoffnungssau". Several days after their arrival, in the early part of May 1891, they had a very heavy snowfall of six to eight inches. Some of the settlers had already started to build their houses, but they were still living in tents.

"Plots of land were soon cleared, hastily plowed and seeded in crop and gardens planted. The yield of first sowing were enormous despite the fact that the sowing had been late and that the land had been poorly cultivated. The settlers were all very poor, no one had any money. The houses were built of logs or lumber sawed by hand.

"In the spring of 1892 a large number of immigrants increased the size of the colony considerably, and again in 1893 by an influx from the Old Country as well as from Ontario and the United States."

The spiritual needs of the settlers were supplied by a pastor who had served them at Dunmore and later followed them to join them in the new settlement. A combination church and parsonage was built on the homestead of the pastor near Spruce Grove. In 1893 strife arose within the group and after involved negotiations twenty families were expelled by the pastor. Times to try the souls of these sincere Lutherans followed. They appealed to the president of the body from which they had been expelled but to no avail. And they found themselves set adrift without spiritual guidance. Where should they turn to in a strange country? Providentially a way was opened.

About this time Miss Margareta Ulmer, who was working in Edmonton, became acquainted with a young man, Charles Ries, who hailed from one of our congregations in Ontario. Learning of the dilemma of these people he wrote to his former pastor the Rev. Frosch of Elmira, Ontario, who referred the matter to the Mission Board of Minnesota and this Board in turn instructed Missionary F. Eggers of Great Falls, Montana, to visit the colony and investigate the situation.

The Rev. F. Eggers arrived in Edmonton and conducted two services on Sunday May 13, 1894 at No. 1 Fire Hall, and on Wednesday May 16 drove out to Stony Plain. A meeting was held on Friday, May 18, in which Pastor E. Eggers reviewed the whole case with the members involved and became convinced that the people had been banished in an unscriptural manner by the pastor. Since the members were

not acquainted with the Lutheran doctrine as professed by the Missouri Synod, the Rev. Eggers took occasion to explain both doctrine and practice of the Synod and answered all questions submitted by the people. Thereupon he put the question to the assembly whether the people desired the services of the Missouri Synod and by a unanimous vote the group invited that Synod to serve them, in fact urged Pastor Eggers to remain and be their minister. He held a communion service on Sunday May 20 and left with a promise to do all in his power to secure a faithful pastor for them in the very near future.

### THE MISSIONARY ARRIVES

Returning home the Rev. Eggers gave a detailed report of the status to President F. Pfotenbauer of the Minnesota district and urged that the ablest candidate should be sent to Stony Plain at the very earliest possible moment. The Mission Board thereupon applied for a candidate and the call was assigned to candidate E. Eberhardt who readily accepted it, in spite of dissuasion of friends, and was ordained as a general travelling missionary west of Winnipeg. He arrived in Alberta in September 1894 at South Edmonton, which was then the terminus of the C.P.R. from where he took a stage to North Edmonton and found lodging at Columbia House east Jasper Avenue. The next day he secured a livery, drove through the bush and muskeg, and found his way to his destination, eventually arriving at the home of Jacob Ulmer Sr., the leader of the group. Here he was welcomed with more than Western hospitality. Mr. Jacob Ulmer had only a two-roomed log house but he insisted generously that the missionary should use the larger room for his quarters and as a place for school, while father Ulmer and his family made themselves as comfortable as possible in the other half of the mansion. "Those were happy days of contentment and peace," recalls the missionary "many an evening during the first winter we sat far into the night discussing religion which was a delight of my host." Truly such a reception must have cheered the heart of the young pastor who, so far from home and the association of fellow pastors, found even in the wilderness such loyal Christian friends, who welcomed him "as an angel of God."

### TURNING THE FIRST SOD

As soon as Pastor Eberhart was settled he took up his duties with characteristic zeal and devotion. The first services were held in the home of Ludwig Ulmer whose household was actually dislodged whenever the congregation gathered for worship. As soon as possible—on

November 12th in fact—the missionary opened the school and confirmation class in his room. No time was lost either to get the congregation established, for on October 28th of that year, even before a constitution had been adopted, an agreement of sale was drawn up for the purchase of 135 acres, the purchase price being \$487.86. On November 5th the congregation accepted and signed a constitution, and immediately made plans for a sorely needed building for worship. The building was begun in the fall of 1894 and the pastor moved into it in the early part of July 1895. That it was a house of no mean proportions (42x48) for that time and on the frontier, appears from a description of the Rev. Kuntz who officially visited Stony Plain in 1896. He facetiously reported "The Rev. Eberhardt dwells, as once did David, in a house of cedar. The 'temple' too, is of cedar, albeit under roof with the parsonage. True, the walls are not like the temple of old covered with gold but with clay. However, Rev. Eberhardt insists that it is 'goldbearing'."



The first church and parsonage of St. Matthew's congregation, Stony Plain, built in 1895.  
Rev. E. Eberhardt on left, Rev. F. H. Eggers on right.

This is the story of the entry of our missions into Alberta in the person of the Rev. E. Eberhardt, who for nearly ten years was its only representative in the North-West; and this was the beginning at this outpost of civilization which had so important a bearing on the future and fortune of our church in the North. This congregation became the mother of a large number of congregations in the immediate neighborhood and, indeed, through the missionary activity of its faithful pastor and the cheerful co-operation of the congregation, it became the mother of the Alberta and British Columbia District.

### "HIS WORD RUNNETH VERY SWIFTLY"

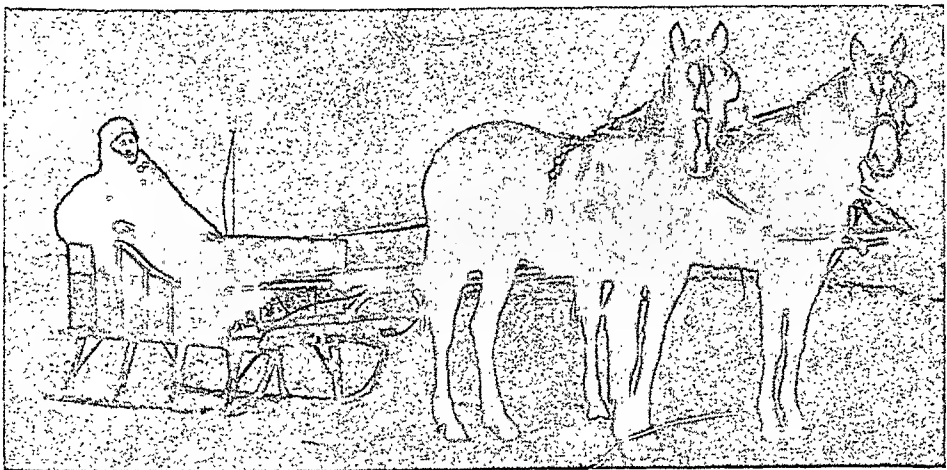
Could anyone even if he were gifted with the most vivid imagination have visualized the far reaching effect this unplanned, unheralded entry would have on the expansion of God's kingdom. In one leap an advance base of the kingdom was moved by the width of half a continent into the North-West woodlands; not indeed in the days of jet planes, nor even in the days of the automobile, but in the days when the ox-cart set the pace and even railroads travelled just a trifle faster than oxen. Nor was it a slow advance mile by mile, by infiltration, but as if on wings of an angel the standard of the Gospel was parachuted into the midst of the 615,000 square miles of the "Last Best West" of Alberta and B.C., from where the Gospel could then be diffused to all points on the compass. "So is the kingdom; it grows, a man knows not how."

## CHAPTER 2

### THE FIRST CLEARING AND BREAKING (1894 - 1904)

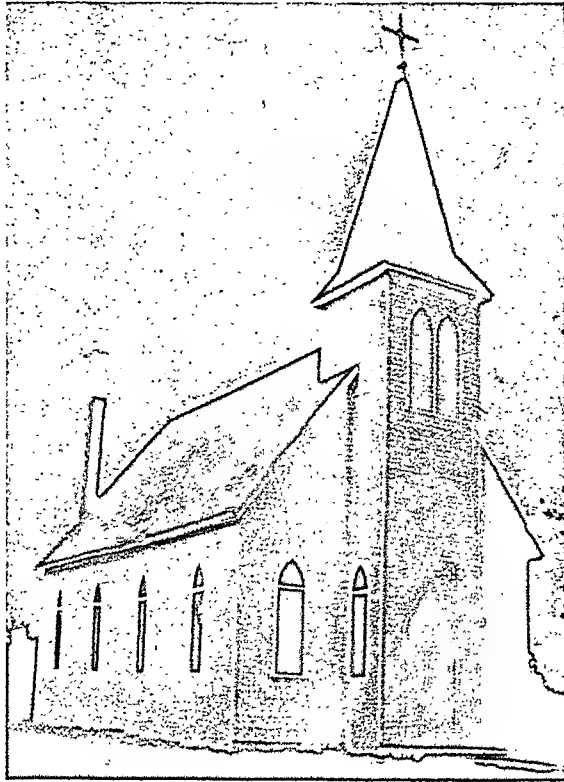
It was a common sight on the prairies and parklands in the the Canadian West at the turn of the century to see a settler arriving on the homestead with his family and a few simple possessions, squatting down, felling trees, and erecting a rude shelter with the help of his family. It was the homesteader's concern to establish himself and get his acres under cultivation as soon as possible. He slashed the bush, and burned the brush, stuck his plough into the ground, tore up the virgin soil, broadcast his seed, impatient to get sufficient under the plough, so as to get early returns from the soil and eventually to "prove up" his homestead. Early and late he toiled and moiled, skimped and saved, in cold and heat, often under the most primitive mode of life and amid untold privations, borne along by the vision of a homestead established. "So is the Kingdom of God."

When Pastor Eberhardt took up his duty as "a laborer together with God" in Alberta he found a virgin field, which had been lavishly blessed by the Creator with a salubrious climate, fertile soil and immense natural resources, but blessed also in the spiritual sense. Settlers from everywhere had been attracted by the lure of the land and roamed far and wide searching for choice locations to settle down. Naturally there were no roads properly speaking. For the most



Rev. E. Eberhardt with his drivers and "jumper". Horses have served our early missionaries faithfully and well.

part, what was known as roads followed the old buffalo and Indian trails and were not much more than a gash in the prairie or a slash through the woods. Swamps, muskegs, underbrush made travel a drugery and a nightmare. Mosquitoes and gnats made summer a season of torture: blizzards, snowdrifts, subzero temperatures, made winter a season of deathly terror. Town and settlements were few and far



The present church at Stony Plain, dedicated in 1899.

between and most of the landscape still lay untouched as it had come forth from the hand of a beneficent Creator. Only here and there had a venturesome settler planted his cabin in a clearing where one might find shelter and food in case of necessity. Woe betide the traveller who, in cutting northwinds and swirling snowstorms, lost his way, and failed to find such a haven of security. For the most part the traveller, be he trapper or pastor, had to be self-supporting and self-contained. Settlements were indeed springing up here, there and



everywhere, but the trails between were long and lonely and directions were difficult to fix unless one were gifted with the sixth sense of direction.

Into this hinterland came Pastor Eberhardt with the commission to bring the "One Thing Needful" which so many settlers had failed to consider when they set out to found a new home; to bring the World of Life and Comfort to souls which were precious to the Savior.

Pastor Eberhardt's first duty was, of course, to supply the needs of the congregation which had called him, which then numbered 112 souls and 58 communicants. There were many duties which demanded his constant and careful attention. He had to organize and fuse this group into a truly Christian congregation, by instructing the old and teaching the young, by visiting the sick and erring and carrying out the multitudinous duties which are part and lot of every minister's life, which, however, were more exacting in the new field among people, who were sincere but needed building up in Christian knowledge. Faithfully and well he performed the task at home. However, both by his call as missionary-at-large and by his position as being the sole Missouri Lutheran minister in the North-West, he was confronted with the duty of serving that field not only intensively but also extensively. His call read "West of Winnipeg", and he meant to cover as much of the West as his time and strength would permit. So we see him sally forth to find other isolated Lutherans. He ranged far and wide, in season and out of season behind his trusty team (than which there were, according to his words, none better) for souls to whom he could bring the Word of Life.

### RECONNOITERING

Twenty odd miles to the east was the growing city of Edmonton, city by fancy rather than by fact, which boasted (and boast it was) of one thousand inhabitants: a city which had visions of becoming the metropolis of the West, a second Chicago, if you will. Rev. Eggers had held two services there on May 14, and the Rev. E. Eberhardt was quick to follow up with further services. One Lutheran, Mr. Schatz, formed the nucleus of this group. A monument of gratitude ought to be erected to the memory of this faithful Lutheran. For it was he who with wide-open hospitality welcomed our early missionaries and always had a room for the pastor, as once there was a room for Elisha in the home of a Shunammite, 2 Kings 4: 8-13. The beginning of Edmonton was not very promising, as is so often the case in the days of small things, but Pastor Eberhardt

carried on in the assurance that the Word by its inherent power will not return void. At Mill Creek, south-east of Edmonton, several families of Lutherans from Minnesota welcomed the missionary and were served as often as possible. Then, there was Beaver Hills, fifty miles east of Stony Plain, where part of the original group from Dunmore had settled. They, too, requested ministrations. Pastor Eberhardt filled with zeal to enlarge "clearing for His Lord" could not and would not deny any call wherever it came from and so to Wetaskiwin, forty-two miles south of Edmonton, he jogged to take care of the neglected group at Bear Hills. He roamed east, he roamed south, wherever opportunity offered, summer or winter, spring or fall, rain or shine, in forty below or eighty above, and at the same time gave loving care and attention to the growing and pressing needs of his flock at home.

In 1896 the Rev. Kuntz, a representative of the Minnesota Board, visited the field on a tour of inspection. He was impressed by the possibilities of the fallow field but also by the impossibility of one man's taking care of such an empire into which settlers were then pouring in ever greater numbers. Pastor Kuntz' report, written at a later date, helps to bring into a nearer focus some of the conditions and happenings of those earlier days. He recalls: "You called for me at the station in Edmonton in a buggy,—all in its own class—a buggy which with the exception of the tongue and the wheels was of typically "Eberhardtian" construction. It had a wagon-box, only it had no sides; a unique seat; a compartment for gown and books—in that contraption we traipsed together two hundred miles. We drove through South Edmonton, a town of two hundred inhabitants down into the beautiful Saskatchewan River Valley, crossed the swift river (in which some prospectors were washing gold) by means of a steel cable and entered real Edmonton which claimed a thousand inhabitants (a claim which I regard stretching the truth a bit). Then we drove through ten to twelve miles of woods and eight miles through the Stony Plain Indian reserve and came to your burg . . . Your congregation at that time was one of the most promising in Canada, composed of eighteen to twenty voters, all sincere, sturdy men. On Sunday we had dedication of the church. The church was festooned with flowers and in front of its doors an arbor had been constructed of 15 feet high spruce . . . Rev. Frank had been preaching in Edmonton but with little success. We had arranged a service at Mr. Schatz' home, but it had to be dropped. We visited Beaver Hills where we had occasion to explain the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, which was a burning question. I still remember the words of a cer-

tain lady who remarked with reference to the words 'This is my Body': 'If my Lord Jesus said this is my body, well then he meant what He said.' We drove to Wetaskiwin. On this trip about five miles south of Edmonton we nearly shot a black bear—and discovered just in time that it was only a black calf."

In 1895 Pastor Eberhardt had an assistant to whom were assigned the mission stations so as to give Rev. Eberhardt more time for his home duties. But in a year's time Rev. Frank left again, and



Mrs. Mary Eberhardt, the first  
resident pastor's wife in Alberta.

the pioneer missionary had to do double duty again. For three, four, five, six years he carried on all alone in the territory, five hundred and twenty-five miles from his nearest brother pastor, Rev. Eggers in Great Falls, Montana, and one thousand miles from his nearest Canadian neighbor at Winnipeg. Fortunately he had at his home a noble self-sacrificing wife, who had come in 1895 to grace the parsonage in that hinterland, two thousand miles from her comfortable home in St. Louis. She literally "kept the home fires burning" and contributed more than her share to the establishment of our church in the West and well deserves the memorial tablet unveiled to her memory in the chapel of Concordia College by the pastors of the Alberta and B.C. District.

### "POSSESSING MORE LAND"

The mission in Northern Alberta had been established on a more or less permanent basis by 1900, but "there was yet much land to be possessed". Pastor Eberhardt's attention was called, in a providential manner, to a likely section of "God's homestead" in Alberta, which he was ready to seize upon. Who has ever heard of a sewing machine being used by God for the extension of His kingdom?! And still in the hand of Divine Providence "who points the clouds their course, whom winds and waves obey", men, beasts, inventions, wars, even the wrath of men, are only so many tools in the accomplishment of His gracious purposes. In this case it was a sewing machine. There came in 1899 a woman from Calgary, (a city of five thousand about two hundred miles south of Edmonton), on a visit to her relatives in Stony Plain. While there she sewed and was in need of a sewing machine. There was only one in the countryside, at the parsonage, which she was invited to use. While at the parsonage she told Rev. Eberhardt of the influx and presence of Lutherans in Calgary, who were without adequate care. As the result of this casual conversation we find Rev. Eberhardt, in the fall of 1899, in Calgary where he held services for nineteen families (93 souls) and thus opened up another part of God's homestead.

Travelling two hundred miles further south, Pastor Eberhardt came to Pincher Creek and visited a group of seventy-one souls, who had previously invited him. Among this group were two men, Charles Schoening and Gustave Neuman, who had been among the Lutherans of Town Berlin, Manitoba, where in 1879 the Rev. E. Rolf had begun work in the Canadian West. The people, mostly from Ontario and the United States, were overjoyed and requested services. Rev. Eberhardt arranged to supply Pincher Creek and Calgary four times a year.

Turning west, Rev. Eberhardt travelled through the Rockies to Vancouver, three hundred and fifty miles distant, to explore the possibilities for missions at the Coast. He held a service in Vancouver for fourteen people, in the Norwegian Church, and came away convinced that prospects were bright, indeed, if a resident minister could be secured. Geographically, Vancouver was next door to the Oregon and Washington District, and they were asked to take over. However, that young District was not able to assume added responsibility, but Rev. Bohl of Seattle promised to remain in contact with the mission and preached there in 1900.

Returning, Rev. Eberhardt revisited Pincher Creek, canvassed Lethbridge, preached at Calgary, and established a chain of promis-

ing mission stations. He urged calling a travelling man for the field between Edmonton and Calgary and thus laid the ground-work for further expansion in Alberta.

### THE SOUTH QUARTER OPENED UP

When the report of this two month's journey was received by the Mission Board of Minnesota, it commissioned Rev. G. Mertz of Missoula, Montana, to relieve Pastor Eberhardt by taking over Pincher Creek and Calgary and exploring the southern part of the province for possible openings. Pastor Mertz made three trips in 1900 and remained for several weeks at each place to consolidate the gain. Calgary, which was growing apace through immigration, and Pincher Creek issued a call and promised to contribute the full salary of \$500.00. There were 340 souls, 112 communicants, 66 families, and 46 voters under our care in that parish, two-thirds of them in Calgary, or approximately as many as in the northern field. The report of Rev. G. Mertz is interesting in showing the rapid settlement of Alberta at the turn of the century. "Both places anticipate a great influx of people. Northern Alberta is developing into a mission field of great proportions for the Lutheran Church. Great droves of immigrants came through Calgary during the last month. Thus on March 7th a wagon-train of four came from Iowa and on March 11th a second one consisting of 21 wagons. There will undoubtedly be much mission material for the pastor, who ought to live in Calgary (5,000 inhabitants), since this is the larger congregation and because from this point of vantage he can keep his eye on the trek towards the north."

While Pastor Mertz was in Southern Alberta in 1901 strengthening and organizing churches he visited Medicine Hat, Josephsburg and other points, where a number of Letts and Esths had settled during the last decade. This is the section in which the Stony Plain group had originally settled and from which they removed in 1891. Only three families had remained there but in 1898 about fifty families from Russia had settled at Josephsburg. Rev. E. Herrmann of Balgonie, near Regina, lived among them for a while, preached and taught school five days a week. Rev. Nachtsheim, as representative of the Minnesota Board, had also visited them in the spring of 1897. Soon after, Rev. Herrmann resigned and the people were without service until July, 1897, when the Rev. H. Rebane of Boston, Mass., visited the Letts and Esths at Josephsburg and also served St. Peter's congregation. He returned in 1898 and then reported that the German Lutherans needed a pastor; but as no one came, the Baptists broke into the field. Pastor Mertz found the remnants of the faithful Lutherans,

met with twenty voters and on Feb. 15, 1901, issued a call to Rev. J. Sillak, who was taking a post-graduate course at the Seminary in Springfield, Illinois. He began his pastorate on Sept. 1. Pastor Sillak visited Medicine Hat, Seven Persons, and then ranged afoot, by team, by train, or by any other conveyance over Western Canada, Minnesota, and the Dakotas, preaching at more than eighteen places in German, Lettish, Esthonian, English, Russian, with unabated missionary zeal.

At the turn of the century, when the work of missions had suddenly grown "man knows not how", it was literally true what Pastor F. Sievers reported in 1900 "without wanting to (we adopted a waiting attitude) we suddenly find that we have more work than ever to do in Canada."

Mission developments now began to accelerate; more and more men were stationed in the field as one place after another was opened up. The call to the Pincher-Calgary parish issued to Rev. Paul Schultz was returned on account of reasons of health, but in the fall of 1901 Pastor E. Treu arrived in Calgary and found a rapidly growing congregation of two hundred and twenty-nine souls, ninety-five communicants, thirty-seven voters, and at Pincher Creek an active congregation of seventy-one souls, thirty-one communicants, fifteen voters. By 1902 this was the picture of our mission field: We had Stony Plain in the north, Calgary in the centre, and Pincher-Josephsburg in the south representing three large clearings in the homestead of missions.

When in 1902 Prof. Theo. Buenger from St. Paul visited the stations in the south he was astounded by the influx of settlers and the visible growth of the field. The Rev. E. Eberhardt appealed to him at the same time to procure a travelling missionary for the C.P.R. line between Calgary and Edmonton. He wrote "I am convinced that a man would have more than enough to do in this field. The Board cannot count on me any longer. I have more than enough work at home and I cannot stand the long drive by team."

A candidate was dispatched to this strategic position in 1902. It was V. Gruber who took up residence in Ponoka and from there served Beaver Hills, Stony Creek, Dried Meat Creek, Wetaskiwin, Lacombe, Innisfail, and Olds. A few lines from his report will give an insight into his labors. "I have organized a congregation of 20 members at Ponoka. Everywhere the services are well attended. The people often sacrifice two and three days to hear a Lutheran sermon again. When I came to one place I learned of the family which had not heard a sermon in eight years. I visited it; and when the woman heard

that I was a Lutheran pastor, she knelt down and with tears streaming down her cheeks thanked God that she finally had a chance to hear a sermon again. I serve 99 families, I have 10 places and good prospects of adding 4 to 6 more. I have begun to teach a school which is attended by 21 children. Since Lutherans live all over the mission field, I can only reach them by team. I must have help. In 9 months I travelled 3,578 miles by rail and team. I have only one wish—that the good Lord might send many workers so that His work may progress up here in 'Sunny Alberta'.

In Calgary, the optimistic hopes for progress were more than realized. More and ever more people came to the rapidly growing city and many settled in the farming region round about. In 1903, 138,000 settlers poured into Western Canada. A temporary set-back, such as has been so often the lot of missions in Canada, occurred when Pastor Treu, who had faithfully served since 1901 and now had a congregation in Calgary numbering 330 souls, accepted a call. Pastor P. Schlemmer of Balgonie was called and accepted, and no long vacancy ensued. Immigrants continued to arrive in the little suburb of Riverside, and soon the congregation became self-supporting. It had 60 to 70 children in school, and the pastor could hardly cope with the work. The organized congregation at Pincher Creek of this parish continued to grow and in order to take care of its increasing need, student E. Brauer was engaged to serve in the school. In 1903 the congregation built "a triplex": church, school and parsonage under one roof. Leavings (now Granum) and Claresholm were added to this parish. In 1904 Pincher Creek together with these places called a resident pastor because they could not well be served from Calgary. Cand. H. Wehmeyer accepted the call and began his work in the fall. Calgary had experienced another change when Pastor Schlemmer resigned in 1904, but the growth of the congregation was not checked. In fact the membership had risen to 410 souls, 207 communicants, and 63 voters. In the summer of 1904 Cand. J. Moebius assumed charge, and the Lord's work went on though the workmen changed.

While the work in the south advanced with leaps and bounds, the work in the north did not languish. The field between Calgary and Edmonton, which Pastor Gruber tried vainly to supply, was opening up through the coming of settlers who wanted a share of "that good black soil which is so fertile that it cannot be surpassed anywhere". Their spiritual needs had to be attended to. It was resolved to divide the field and call another missionary. The new man in the field was George J. Meyer. Edmonton, too, which Pastor Eberhardt had served faithfully during all these years was beginning to

feel the impact of immigration and needed the services of a local pastor, especially since Pastor Eberhardt's congregation had grown to 645 souls, and demanded his full attention. The 52 souls, 27 communicants, and 14 voters, who formed a congregation in Edmonton requested Synod to send a pastor.

When in the fall of 1904 the tenth anniversary of our mission work in Alberta came, with its beautiful harvest of golden grain on the earthly fields which had so long lain fallow, there was also ripening a spiritual harvest of souls in fields just lately brought under cultivation. The work of the church had taken root in Alberta thanks to the continued blessing of the Lord. Many new fields had opened since that day in September, 1894, when Pastor Eberhardt put the plough of the Word into the virgin soil of the Lord's homestead and sowed the seed of the Gospel. The field, which at that time had only been dozens of miles in extent, now reached 400 miles north and south; and where one man had labored, six laborers were now patiently ploughing, sowing, reaping. For six long years the pioneer plowman had sown, who knows how often in tears. Now five harvesters were coming back with rejoicing bringing sheaves with them, entering into the labors of others. These laborers, in addition to Pastor Eberhardt, were the Pastor V. Gruber, J. Sillak, H. Wehmeyer, and J. Moebius. Whereas in 1894 there had been only one field with 112 souls, 58 communicants, and 21 voters, by fall of 1914 there were five fields under cultivation and the harvest returns showed 1,566 souls, 778 communicants, and 106 voters.

In view of this we can appreciate the enthusiastic summary of the Mission Board: "The gateway to an immense field is wide open, and the Lord has already permitted us to see results. The expense dare not deter us. The Lord has given us these opportunities and He will also bless us that we can carry out the work so that in the far North congregations may blossom to the glory of His Name."

Truly, it was the Lord's doings and marvelous it is in our eyes, that the seemingly haphazard work, with limited resources and facilities, by weak spiritual husbandmen should produce such amazing results. However it is the Lord's way to make much come out of little in order to teach us not to despise the day of small things, and to impress on us the lessons in spiritual husbandry: "for the earth bringeth forth fruit of itself, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come." "The Kingdom of God is as if a man should cast seed into the ground and the seed shall spring up and grow HE KNOWETH NOT HOW."



### CHAPTER III.

#### INCREASING THE ACREAGE

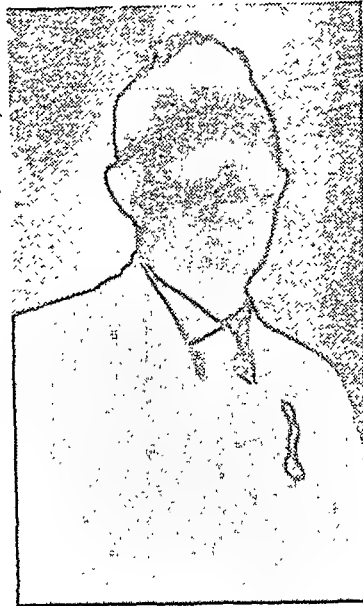
1904 - 1914

One of the striking features of a homesteading country is the rapid development which a whole countryside often registers—one might say, over night. Last year's raw lands, as by magic, de-developed into a settled community, where at 12 months before there had been limitless stretches of virgin landscape, there mushroomed in weeks or months established farmsteads, villages, towns, and cities, with the distinctive elevators along their railroad siding; and what ten years ago was range or the stamping ground of buffalo, moose and wolves, is now turned into a peaceful, tho bustling community of stores, homes, schools, and churches.

The early years of our church's history of Alberta were years of comparatively slow growth, immigration was normal, and our missions could keep pace with the influx of the 600,000. At the turn of the century, however, the entry of settlers was accelerated; and when the first decade closed, the brook had turned to a swollen stream. Beginning with 1903, the stream grew and grew as though turned on by an unseen power, so that by the fall of 1914, 2,482,000 had been admitted into Canada. They came from the United States, from Eastern Canada and from Europe, in ever-increasing volume and a very large proportion of these came to Alberta: 138,000 came in 1904, 375,00 in 1912, 400,000 in 1913. There were long caravans from the middle States, from Eastern Canada whole train-loads of hungry land seekers, shiploads of immigrants from Europe, all attracted by the lure of free land or the hope of quick money returns on a small investment. The inflow was unbelievable and caused Dr. F. Pfotenhauer, a man not given to enthusiastic exaggeration, to open his mission report with the words "The immigration coming into Canada is simply immense"; and another exclaimed: "Western Canada has had a gigantic immigration."

As a result of this sudden and undirected inrush, the six missionaries who were in the field in the fall of 1904 were overwhelmed, literally swamped with opportunities. They tried valiantly to grapple with the problem of keeping up with the settlers who were scattering over the wide range of plains and park-lands. Unfortunately there was at that time no Lutheran Immigration Board, such as later in the twenties, which could direct the incoming Lutheran immigrants into larger settlements of their own. The loud and insistent call for laborers and more laborers was heard out of the Northland. Providentially and

without planning on our part six men who were in the field in 1904 were placed most advantageously at strategic points from where they could in a limited way at least follow the developments: Medicine Hat and Pincher Creek in the south, Calgary at the gateway to the north, the railroad between Calgary and Edmonton in the centre, and Edmonton and Stony Plain in the north. Fortunately, nay providentially, there were men at the helm in the Minnesota District who had vision, courage, and faith to recognize and improve the opportunity given to them by the Ruler of the Universe who has determined the time before appointed and the bounds of their habitation and who directs and utilizes movements of peoples, such as this one, for the build-



Rev. C. F. Walther, revered director  
of Canadian missions.

ing of His kingdom. There were men like Pres. F. Pfotenhauer, Rev. H. Meyer, Rev. A. Oetjen, Prof. C. Heuer, and especially Rev. C. F. Walther, of whom it has been humorously yet truthfully said that he "dreamed, thought, talked, planned, and lived Canadian missions". Then there were the mission-minded, open-handed brethren in Minnesota who ungrudgingly contributed larger and ever larger sums for Canadian missions, in addition to the heavy demands made by their own fields. Listen to this eloquent plea of C. F. Walther: "In Alberta the field stretches 360 miles north of the boundary and the stream

is reaching ever further. It is truly a tremendous territory into which we are carrying the Lord's work. But is not Canada a large ice field in which man can barely exist? Indeed papers often describe it so only to report on another page that in the last ten years no country has experienced such an upswing as Canada. However, the church does not ask: Is the country hot or cold, but she asks, are there people to whom we can preach the gospel? And such is the case in Canada. A veritable mass movement has set into Canada. In the last five years exactly 996,164 people came to Canada and of these 345,303 came from the United States, among whom there were undoubtedly many from our Synod. But the largest number of Lutherans come from Russia, Roumania and Austria, and this makes it our double duty to minister to them. These people do not know us and we must show them that we are indeed bringing them the Gospel in all its purity. If we fail they will fall prey to false churches or will fall away entirely. The mission material is there and the spiritual need is great."

With their fingers on the pulse of immigration and ready to seize every given opportunity, these men of missions directed, encouraged, and personally visited the ever-expanding field in order "to buy while the market is here, to gather in while the day is clear and while the grace and Word of God may be found. Idle hands will soon be empty hands" (Luther).

Requests and more requests were made for candidates and still the call went out: "Reapers, more reapers". Thirty more willing enthusiastic candidates left our Seminary during these years, some before graduation, to take their place often under unbelievable privations and hardships in the vast harvest field of the Canadian North-West.

The candidates, and such they were for the most part, who came to put the sickle into the fields white for harvest, caught the spirit of their superintendent and in the face of opposition, undeterred by discouragement, gave the best they had, driven by their love for the Saviour and His blood-bought souls. They drove or walked in weather of every kind, over roads which were not there, through bush and over windblown prairies to bring the Word of Life to congregations, families, or often single souls. Conferences became Boards of Strategy where reports of work done were heard, prospects and possibilities of new fields discussed and provisions made to win Alberta for Christ. They reached out in every direction from the bases established in the decade before, which now became advanced posts to cover still more territory. If one scans the list of stations, visited and served, during 1904—1914, one cannot fail to see the good hand of the Lord who led the church into the West when He did and thus prepared

the church to be "on the spot" when the country opened up. As superintendent Walther declared: "It is not true in Canada, as sorry to say it is at other places, that we must take the leavings. In many sections we were first on the spot."

### A REPORT FROM THE FIELD

Not in idle boast nor to glorify the achievements of men, but to glorify the Head of the Church, who gave such zeal, let us look into a report out of that past: "In my parish there are 150 to 200 souls. The distances are so great that I cannot reach them all. In winter I preach at three places: At my home, then 13 miles to the east, then 22 miles north-west. I have only one wish; that all these precious souls, perhaps 500 of them, who are scattered far and wide, could be gathered every Sunday in one church to hear the Word of Life."

Living in this age of autos and fair-to-good roads we often glibly pass over the mission reports of those days; little realizing what hardships were entailed in an endeavor to bring the Bread of Life to hungry starving souls. We take a page out of a diary of that day and note these entries: "Jan. 12—school 9-11; call to a funeral; drove 35 miles. Jan. 16—preached two times. Jan. 17—returned 40 miles over rough, rutted roads. Jan. 18—school 9-3 p.m.; drove 25 miles to a congregation meeting to issue a call for a pastor. Jan. 19—services: drove back 35 miles. School daily till Friday. Jan. 21—call to a funeral at a station; drove 12 miles that evening. Jan. 22—drove 25 miles to funeral service. Jan. 23—drove 15 miles to a station; afternoon 10 miles to another place; drove home at night 24 miles." And this missionary ends up his report. "We are here for the purpose to go whither the Savior sends us and we ought to be glad that we are thought worthy to serve Him in out-of-way places."

In an article Dr. Fuerbringer makes these observations: "At the beginning of winter we ought to remember our missionaries in Northwestern Canada who in that land, with real courage in the face of hardship and privations, do pioneer work, our missionwork, and shun neither extreme cold nor long distances to carry out the duty of their office. We ought to remember also the courageous ministers' wives, who, often coming from comfortable circumstances, willingly take upon themselves the work, discomforts, and privations, to be real helpmates to their husbands. At this time of year we ought especially to support them with our prayers."

Were they dismayed? One would not have been surprised to hear that they would have been a disgruntled lot, who in addition to loneliness and a hard life often had to suffer ingratitude on the part of

the very persons whom they had come to serve. How different, however, is the enthusiastic report of one missionary who writes: "Thanks to God I can report growth and progress. Mission work in Alberta is gratifying. The results we see make all hard trips and the hardships especially in winter easily bearable. I wish to call your attention to Western Canada as to a field which the Lord has entrusted to our Synod. This is evidenced by the blessings which He has put on our work. Western Canada ought to have special consideration when the calls are assigned to candidates, and I hope that this year a large number of candidates will enter this field."

### AN OVERVIEW

To give a comprehensive view of this field as it existed in those years we let Rev. H. Meyer report on his trip of inspection through the field. He writes: "Crossing the Alberta boundary we come to Irvine; 15 miles south is the congregation of Josephsburg, where the Letts and German Lutherans have a church on 40 acres. Rev. Sillak is the missionary. Since this immense territory demands his whole time, a pastor was called, Rev. L. Walper, who preaches at seven places.

"Next we come to Pincher Creek, a most romantic spot facing the Rockies. In this fertile district lives Rev. H. Wehmeyer. The congregation which numbers 15 voters built and paid for a parsonage and a church, during the last few years, and also pays part of the salary. Two places, Claresholm and Leavings, 40 and 50 miles distant, belong to this parish. The missionary teaches school at Pincher Creek and at his stations as often as possible.

"Calgary on the Bow River, the most important city of southern Alberta and an important railroad and business centre, is a city of 10 to 12 thousand, a very busy place. The country which but a few years ago was bald prairie is rapidly changing into a beautiful farming community. In this important city we have a large congregation, 410 souls, 207 communicants, 63 voters. It has a spacious church and a large parsonage. A large number of children (80) are being taught by the pastor. This congregation is self-supporting and ought to have a teacher. Calgary is well situated for work in B.C.

"The next parish north is 100 miles long, from Olds to Wetaskiwin. Here Pastor Gruber served several years and is now replaced by Pastor George Meyer. Serving this field is strenuous work and requires much travel; and the country is rapidly opening up. Forty miles on each side of the tract are settlements. The missionary serves 10 stations and has prospects for more. At Bismark is a congregation. The

trail from Ponoka, the home of the missionary, to Bismark runs through a beautiful farm country on rough corduroy roads over stumps and through swamps. Tucked away in the woods live the members, dear, accommodating, hospitable folks. On the hill stands the modest, unadorned church, built of rough, unpainted boards. It is breezy as the wind whistles through the cracks. In spite of their poverty and although they lost their crop through frost, they pay salary according to their ability.

"Edmonton, the capital city, has by general consent a great future. Its location in the heart of the province, in a fertile agriculture region, is very favorable. The building boom is immense. There are 10 to 12 thousand inhabitants. Edmonton and Strathcona are what Minneapolis and St. Paul are, Twin Cities of the Northwest. For years we have preached here, but only in recent years have we become established. The congregation of 19 voters bought a lot with a suitable building for church and parsonage. The congregation needs help if it should grow, and this is essential for our mission in Alberta.

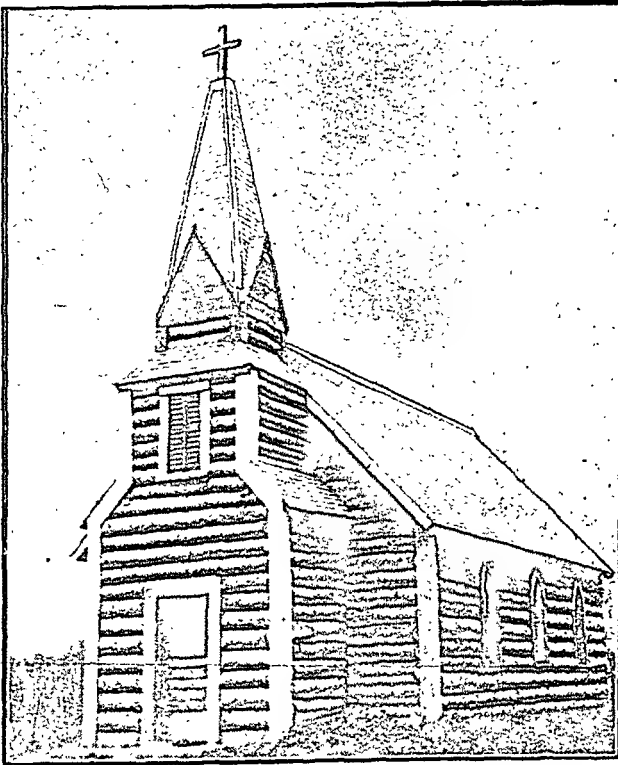
"In a favored farming community 25 miles west of Edmonton is our oldest congregation, at Stony Plain. Rev. Eberhardt left for Snohomish, Washington, in the spring of 1905. The congregation is large, and it has a school taught by the pastor. The congregation is still zealous for missions, not only supporting them by gifts but permitting the pastor to do work elsewhere.

"This is an overview of part of the mission field. At many places more workers are needed, other sections ought to be explored and served. We ought not to forget that the nature of our work in that far-away country is a difficult one. First, the pastors are nearly all isolated without the comforting association of brethren. Second, there is much opposition on the part of sects who regard our pastors as intruders. Third, the pastors have difficulty in finding our fellow-Lutherans and often do not find them at all, because they do not know where they are. The pastors ought to be informed when people go to Canada or get in contact with the missionary before they go there so that they might know where Lutheran settlements are to be found."

"When one hears of the stirring times through which Alberta passed during these years and of the development which our mission made one should like to look into the personal reports of men who were in the field. However, the men apparently were so busy everywhere that they had no time to write long reports. We must therefore gather information on their activities from the official minutes of the Pastoral Conferences. Scanning the pages of these battle-scarred

books we find entries which give us such an insight into the plans and accomplishments of those days. Here are a few facts gathered at random:

In 1905 six pastors supplied 27 stations. In this year Pastor Eberhardt accepted a call to Snohomish, Wash, a severe blow to the district which needed his guidance. In 1906 eight missionaries had charge of 35 stations. Pres. F. Pfötenhauer inspected the southern field.—Edmonton is appealing for help to build a church. "If help is not given, it will mean a loss to our mission in the north since the Canadian Northern is bringing in many immigrants into the country east and north of Edmonton." In 1907 there were 41 stations supplied by six pastors and two students.—B.C. was explored by the Oregon and Washington District. In 1908 there were 45 places supplied by 9 pastors.—A resolution is presented for the formation of a separate District.—The Calgary school is attended by 130 pupils taught by the pastor and a teacher. Southern B.C. is opened to missions by



The first church at Mellowdale, Alberta; a fine specimen of Western Canadian church architecture.

Pastor H. Wehmeyer. In 1909 there are 49 stations served by 10 pastors.—A resolution to issue a joint paper with Sask.—Rev. E. Eberhardt returns to Stony Plain.—A school is opened in Edmonton by Pastor H. Schuetz. In 1910 there were 68 stations taken care of by 13 pastors and 3 teachers. Bountiful harvests. Very heavy immigration.—Rev. A. Rehwinkel called for Pincher Creek and Eastern B.C.—Calgary school has 150 pupils, another teacher is called. In 1911 there were 95 stations served by 17 pastors and 3 teachers. Proposal of Sask. to form a Western District is discussed.—The Oregon District asked Minnesota District to take over B.C.—A missionary reports that he travelled 1,877 miles in four months (811 by buggy and 511 on horseback).—Vernon and Vancouver have each a resident minister. In 1912 there were 101 stations served by 21 pastors.—A paper for Western Canada is published.—Dedication of the frontier log church at Mellowdale.—The school at Edmonton taught by Teacher Dobring is attended by 50 children—Calgary, Immanuel reports a membership of 1,000 souls, 600 communicants, 147 voters, 175 school-children and 275 in S.S.—Stony Plain now has 743 souls.—Immigrant missionary requested for the West.—Southeastern Alaska explored by Rev. John E. Herzer. In 1913 there were 125 stations served by 22 pastors and 4 teachers. The Southern Conference decides to open a college in Calgary on a site presented by a citizen of Calgary.—Dr. W. Dau and Pastor Th. Kohn visited the field.—City mission started in Calgary—Vernon, B.C. dedicates a church.—Edmonton church self-supporting. In 1914 the question again came up about organizing Districts in the West. A school was dedicated at Stony Plain—and a school was held at Wetaskiwin.—Disastrous drought and then war.

Pastors serving during this period were:

E. Eberhardt; J. Sillak; V. Gruber; H. Wehmeyer; J. Moebius, W. Lussky; L. Walper; F. Jahn; H. Reinitz; W. Albrecht; F. Falkenroth; G. Meyer; H. Schuetz; H. Arndt; F. Brockmann; F. Schleef; F. Janzow; O. H. Schmidt; E. T. Heyne; A. Rehwinkel; P. Koehneke; O. Groth; T. Herzer; M. Bertram; A. Gerken; G. Griesse; J. Meyer; E. Brandt; J. E. Herzer; E. Bertermann; S. Thies; T. Dannenfeldt; C. Janzow; H. Wiltenburg; A. Schwermann; C. Fickenscher; E. Neils; W. Fechner.

"So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed." Medicine Hat, which had just been established in 1904 with 44 souls, became the center for fifteen stations. Lethbridge, which just appeared as a name in 1904, reached out to four stations. Golden Spike, which is a daughter of Stony Plain, started its own household in 1908, sent the Word of Life to four out-lying stations. Claresholm, which owed its beginning



to a pastor from Calgary, took care of the needs of six stations. Nisku, which was opened by a pastor from Edmonton, reached out in all directions. Pincher Creek through its pastor worked in southern B.C. as far as the Arrow Head Lakes to open up the mountain valleys to the glad sound of the Gospel. Bruderheim, which joined us in 1907, took care of four stations to the east of it. Wetaskiwin, a place which Pastor Eberhardt had served in 1894, brought seven places under the Gospel by the energetic activity of its pastor. Messengers of the Gospel sped even into the frontier north of Edmonton. And B.C., whose valleys and seashores spoke so eloquently of the glory of God, heard the message of the redemption proclaimed at ten places. Truly the hand of God had been with the missionaries, giving power to His Word, reviving the courage for the arduous tasks by letting them see visible returns of their labors.

Thus we find when the decade 1904-1914 drew to a close and a survey of the progress was made that these figures stood out as a tangible evidence that the Word had not returned void. Where twenty years previous 1 pastor was serving 1 congregation there were now 25 pastors supplying 6,000 souls and 2,500 communicants at 100 stations.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THEN CAME THE STORM

1914 - 1921

Homesteading is risky, hard, backbreaking work, incessant toil, hardship and discouragement. To wrest a farmhome from virgin land calls for constant application, endless slaving and untold privations. But there is compensation in seeing the stubborn soil yield acre by acre; and when the hard-won fields stand forth in their golden glory of ripening grain, then even the most fatigued homesteader feels a glow of accomplishment, and he is gladdened by the prospect of rich returns. Alas—too often with this expectation already in his grasp, his fond hopes are shattered in a moment. Angry, sullen cloudheads appear on the horizon, tinged with the ominous pea-green, which foretells destructive hail. In a twinkling the furies of a “northwestern” are unleashed, driving the clouds before them. With foreboding heart the homesteader stands there in helpless awe as he hears, in the distance, the drum and the drone of hail tearing thru and stripping the trees and flailing fields in its mad orgy of destruction, drawing nearer, ever nearer, until with a thundrous violence it unloads heavens artillery on his frightened fields of ripening grain, beating down, trampling, tramping it into the very ground till not a spear remains. As the devastating demon rushes on to further destruction, the homesteader stands there heavy heart and sagging frame—the rewards of a year of toil taken out of his very hands. Would this be the fortune of the Homestead of God in Alberta?

The previous decade had been one of constant and consistent growth and progress. Congregations had arisen overnight, stations had been added to stations, missionaries had been despatched in ever-increasing number, and glowing accounts of a glorious harvest of souls had been reported from the whole field. There were prospects that in a few short years the whole West would be a “proved up” homestead of our God. Then came the rumblings of war in Europe, and with a startling suddenness the thunderclouds of war unloaded their fury on the unsuspecting world on that fateful day in August when “the lights went out over Europe”. Heavy were the hearts and fearful lest this cataclysm might destroy the harvest of missions just ripening. Would all the labor be lost, would all the planning and hoping, would all the prayers of God’s children for success be in vain? So it appeared.

The empire was at war; and Canada, the loyal daughter, rose to gird herself for the conflict. Occupations of peace were suddenly transformed into activities of war. Patriotism burned brightly, but all

too often it flared into ugly war-hysteria; and acts of violence, which the government with characteristic British justice tried to curb, were perpetrated on the innocent immigrants who had left troubled Europe to find a peaceful home and better living conditions for themselves and their children in a land of plenty to which they had been urgently invited. The government was successful in the main to curb the extreme excess of super-patriots "who wanted to fight the Kaiser in Canada", and thus the recent arrivals were, on the whole, little disturbed. But an indefinable fear gripped the settlers, who had hardly taken root in the new soil, and paralyzed their peaceful lives. The disastrous drought of 1914 was indeed relieved by two years of crop, but these were followed by two more years of crop failure. General business depression brought on unemployment and low prices, and all this fell with double impact on the new arrivals, who for the most part were deeply in debt. Immigration which had reached 400,000 in 1913 became a mere trickle of 36,000 in 1914 and brought the feverish activities of the missionaries to a sudden halt.

What would become of the work on the Lord's acres? Would it cease altogether and would the beautifully developed field of missions go back to a barren waste? Stunned and trying to get their bearings the workers for a while carried on cautiously as best they could and continued to preach and teach under the benign protection of the powers ordained by God. The language question became acute in some localities, and a temporary closure of churches was voluntarily agreed to. But soon readjustments were made, and when by the good hand of God two bountiful harvests were garnered and in 1915 and '16 business began to feel the effect of the war boom, pastor and people no longer merely marked time but went on to renewed activity. The Lord's work must go on.

This trend may be marked by a reference to reports in the minutes of the conferences. In 1914, owing to the momentum of former years we find a conference at Stony Plain discussing the advisability of forming a Western District, raising the standard of our schools, and publicizing the church. We read of the congregations at Inga and Hanna dedicating churches, of Mellowdale on the northern frontier opening a school, as did Wetaskiwin and Tuxedo, Calgary. At conferences we hear of dedications at Hilda and Ferintosh, of a school started at Heinsburg, Peace Hill and Friedenthal; we read of plans to explore the Peace River country and of the work done by Pastor E. H. Brandt in B.C., who in addition to his own charge in Vancouver supplied 14 places in that province.

Following the flow of events which are typical of the work

done during the war years we come to 1916 and find steady progress. Retrogression was in evidence in nearly all urban centres, Edmonton, Vernon, Medicine Hat, but in that year it was reported that Granum became self-supporting and that in Calgary the one congregation had grown to three congregations and 2 preaching places. The one sad note in this generally optimistic record was the closing of all schools owing to the pressure of the times. This made it necessary for the missionaries to centre their attention on Saturday, Sunday and summer schools to give the young adequate instruction.

Indicative of the spirit of faith and courage which actuated the mission workers in the West are the words of Pastor Eberhardt at the 1916 Minnesota convention: "No one should imagine that the mission work has lost its importance. The work in that extensive territory is only in its beginning. The depression and the war will pass by. Immigration will begin again. We need only a few good years and all will be forgotten. For this reason we should keep up the work begun and should not think of retrenching, lest damage be done which cannot be easily repaired when better times return." And Pastor C. F. Walther, the doughty superintendent of missions, declared: "Canada is still the most important mission field of our entire Synod. In spite of difficulties progress has been made. In 1912 there were 38 missionaries in Western Canada, in 1916 47. In 1912 there were 190 stations now 255. In 1912 there were 12,814 souls, in 1915 there were 15,024".

### A BLESSING IN DISGUISE

It is one of the marvels of God's world-government that He can make good come out of evil and make even the wrath of man to praise Him. In retrospect one wonders at the infinite wisdom of the Ruler of the Church who, even out of the horrors of war, made a blessing come to His church.

The years of 1904-13 had been years of intense activity on the part of the missionaries in their effort to maintain contact with and gather into organized groups, people who had come from church conditions different from those prevailing here. Many, especially those who had come from European conditions of state-churchism, had only a limited conception of Lutheran doctrine and still less of the policy of the church. The missionary did not then have time (nor did the settler) to indoctrinate and prepare them for membership in our congregations. The missionaries were happy if they could temporarily gather the people and keep them under his care until such a time as intensive work was possible. The pause in immigration gave the pastor and the people a breathing spell. People had become more

settled and more approachable, and pastors no longer had to run themselves out of breath gathering in the arrivals and could work more leisurely trying to deepen the religious knowledge of the people and to train them, by acquainting them with local church conditions, teaching them Christian giving and making them more mission-minded. This respite brought about by the war was a blessing in disguise which permitted building substantially on the solid rock of indoctrination. And so was the church established and the Word grew and multiplied.



A familiar scene during the pioneer days.

However the lull in the feverish activity due to fewer immigrants, redounded not only to the inner development of the churches, but again appeared in another direction also. The congregation grew steadily in numbers. There was more exploration possible in the immediate territory, and many were brought in who might have been overlooked in the rush of the earlier period. Further, members who had been total strangers began to seek contact with members of sister congregations at gatherings such as mission days and developed a sense of community interest. They became acquainted with the work of synod and had the horizon of missions widened. They were taught to feel responsibility for missions in Canada, which had till that time been carried on entirely by the Minnesota District. Throughout the years, Superintendent C. F. Walther had wisely endeavored to imbue the Canadian conferences and congregations with the responsibility of looking after their own house by progressively assuming direction of the mission work and eventually taking full charge. The matter of organizing a Western District had been discussed since 1908 and had been on the docket of many conferences.

It was, then, a logical step and a natural one, that in May 1917, even while the armies of millions were locked in mortal combat and guns were reverberating on Europe's fields in decisive struggle, a call went out for a pastors' and laymens' conference to be held at Stony Plain on July 11-16. The immediate impulse was the joint celebration of the 400th anniversary of the posting of the 95 Theses by Dr. M. Luther; the remote purpose was to make pastors and especially the congregations more conscious of their unity and of the responsibility to carry on the work in their own province. The response was most enthusiastic: 25 congregational delegates and 18 pastors gathered for this important event.

This conference, which was followed by four other meetings, was a milestone in the development of the Alberta church. A few items taken from the minutes will permit us to catch some of the significance of that meeting. The organization was effected by the chairman, Pastor Rehwinkel, much on the order of a synod and the program was closely patterned after that of a synod meeting. A doctrinal paper was read on the topic: "The influence of the Reformation on Religious and Secular Education" and gave occasion to discuss the vital question of Christian day schools and their re-establishment in Alberta. A detailed survey of the 30 odd stations in the mission field was given by the respective missionaries, and plans were made to explore the Peace River country. The reading of a second paper by Rev. John E. Herzer gave direction to the conference: "How can the Alberta and British Columbia congregations be prepared for the eventual organization of a District?" This paper gave information on the nature, the purpose, the functions and the organization of a synod.

A feature of the first convention was the celebration of the 400th anniversary of the Reformation on Sunday, July 15. Since this was quite extraordinary in times such as these, a quotation from an article in the "Lutheraner" will be of interest: "A special train from Edmonton brought visitors from Bruderheim, Beaver Hills, Nisku, Leduc, Wetaskiwin, Peace Hills and Brightview. Special R.R. tickets had been printed: "Lutheran Church Convention Special. Good only on July 15, 1917". Arriving at Stony Plain a procession was formed and marched thru the town to the country church 2 miles distant, preceded by a band and led by Pastor C. Schultz, who carried the Canadian flag, which was followed by a magnificent Luther-banner made by Mrs. Schwermann. The gathering grew apace and when, at 11 o'clock the battle-hymn of the Reformation "A mighty Fortress" welled up, no fewer than 1,700 people were gathered. The collection and extra gifts amounted to \$1,200—quite a sum for Western Canadians

at that time. Many people present had left their homes at 11 o'clock Saturday night and had driven all night to catch the early train at Bruderheim."

The net result of this conference was that the delegates, and thru them the congregations, were familiarized with the church work as carried on by our church and an impetus was given for more co-operation in the work of the church. The year 1917, thus, marked a great step forward in the life of the church, especially in a better understanding of the sphere of activity of the church and in an enlarged vision of the duties close at home, preparatory to the attempt to shoulder some of the responsibilities in the two provinces. The war clouds, indeed, had not lifted and the stand of the church was still difficult, but God had brought home the conviction that even in the midst of turmoil His work must go on, and He had made hearts willing and able to go forward in the name of the Lord.

#### DARKNESS BEFORE DAWN

The church is not of the world, but it is in the world and in consequence is affected by conditions which prevail in the world. Depressions, wars, upheavals have an effect on the outward life of the church, although these cannot disturb its inner calm. In the Lord's strength it goes on with Him. But for His grace and guidance it would be stunted and overwhelmed.

This was apparent in the dark period of 1918. And it was dark! The war had cost an untold number of lives and was now going on to its climax. Superintendent C. F. Walther gives a vivid picture of the conditions in Alberta at that time. He reports: "The lot of our church in the Northwest in 1918 has been worse than at any time during the war years. Hatred has grown, and increasingly the people are made to suffer actual persecution at some places, although the government is making every effort to protect them. . . . Our mission work has been made more difficult and expensive because Alberta has had an unprecedented crop failure. Everything is burned up by the scorching heat. In July many farmers had to move their stock to the North or to the mountains, because on scorched fields there was no fodder. In many sections late sown wheat did not sprout and one can drive for miles without finding so much as a green spear of grass. In the North the grain fields were beautiful, but on July 24th came a hard frost and in one night most of the crop was gone. One could see beautiful stands of wheat with empty heads rattling in the winds. The farmer was fortunate who harvested 1/5 of a crop. Oats and barley suffered, too, and at some places potatoes froze in

the ground. In all Alberta the average will be about 4 bushels of wheat per acre.

"Finally, our mission workers suffered by reason of the severe influenza epidemic which also entered the homes of our missionaries, and on account of the distance from doctors it was difficult to get medical aid. Death claimed one of our young men."

However, in spite of such adverse circumstances some progress continued to be recorded. The activity which was in evidence in 1917 is again reflected in the minutes of the second Pastor-Lay-delegate conference at Bruderheim, July 9-14, 1918. The spirit of the conference may be sensed from an article in the Lutheran Witness captioned: "Conference 400 miles north of the 49th": "With over 50 delegates present the conference opened. What seemed but a few years ago to be a hopeless conglomeration of Lutherans, hailing from every clime and country, has grown, taken shape and form, and was now assembled for a second time in a representative convention, discussing ways and means to organize a separate Western Canadian District. No wonder that the hearts of those present were full of rejoicing because it was so plainly seen that the Lord had been with us and had wonderfully blessed our faltering hands." Scanning the records we come upon such items as these: Plans for spiritual care of our men in the army were made and service pastors will give the best service possible because no chaplains could be appointed. The financial secretary reported receipts amounting to \$4,606 in addition to the \$2,563 which was collected as thankoffering for the jubilee fund. There were 26 parishes, 6,574 souls, 3,116 communicants. The subsidy would be \$14,000. The matter of forming a District came to a head, and by a vote of 32 to 5 it was resolved to ask release from the Minnesota District and to thank it for all the loving service it had rendered by carrying on the work successfully from the beginning at great expense. The publicity bureau reported placing books in the libraries in Edmonton, Vernon, Ponoka and Calgary. The college was again discussed and stress was laid on the necessity of making it not only a preparatory school for ministers, but one for general education of both boys and girls. It was reported that the University of Alberta had offered to give 7 acres near their buildings for such a college. But since the time was not favorable, the matter was tabled. The article from the Lutheran Witness concludes: "This memorable convention came to a close on Sunday with a grand out-door mission celebration. Approximately 2,000 people attended and listened to sermons in the German, English and Russian languages. The singing was accompanied by the brass band of the Bruderheim congregation. Those of us present



who had seen something of the manner of the meagre and seemingly hopeless beginnings of our Canadian Mission, and here beheld this magnificent festival throng recruited from all climes and lands, and now united in this distant North under the grand old banner of the Lutheran Church could not help but be moved within our hearts and say: Oh, truly, the Lord has been with us. All glory to God!"

### AND THE LAND RESTED FROM WAR. JOSH 11, 23

1919

Peace had come to a war-weary world on Nov. 11, 1918, amid the prayers of praise and thanksgiving by the children of God. The world was licking its wounds and was trying to adjust itself by means of the peace conference and the League of Nations. Economically Canada had profited by the high prices for agricultural products during the latter part of the war, and this was reflected in more liberal contributions to the church. The \$4,600 for missions and \$2,563 for the Jubilee fund certainly showed an upward trend over against the paltry \$1,000 reported in 1916 and \$2,000 in 1917 and leads one to believe that among other beneficial lessons, which our congregations were beginning to learn, was Scriptural giving "as God has prospered".

A delegate convention, the third, was held at Stony Plain July 9-13, 1919, which was attended by 26 pastors and 32 lay delegates, many more than on the previous occasion, indicative of a growing interest especially on the part of the congregations. In connection with this meeting, the 25th anniversary of St. Matthew's congregation and its Pastor E. Eberhardt was celebrated, which was attended by 1,500. Rev. F. Eggers of Watertown, who explored the field in 1894, delivered the sermon. The conference took up routine business, elections, report on missions and postwar plans. A paper on "Evangelical methods in the conduct of the public ministry" was read by Prof. John H. Herzer. The conference passed a resolution in support of the proposal made by the Man.-Sask. conference to ask the General Body to erect a college for and in the Canadian West. A committee was appointed to gather information to what extent the Alberta Lutherans are interested in this cause, how many boys would enroll and to make proposals when and where to begin.

### THEN HAD THE CHURCHES REST AND WERE EDIFIED.

ACTS 9, 13

1920

The church was well on its way to grow into an active District and was beginning to function efficiently in these pre-synodical meetings. Permission had been received from the Minnesota District to

establish its own household, and the General Body had approved of this in June, 1920. The Alberta conference had now to make the necessary preparations for taking over the field. Further, the request for establishing a college in the West, which had been on the docket of many conferences in Alta. and Sask. since the abortive attempt to establish a school in Calgary in January 1914, had been officially presented by a joint delegation of the two Western conferences at this same Detroit convention and had been granted. It became necessary, therefore, to formulate definite plans also for this project.

Preparatory to this, two meetings were held in the fall of 1920. Items of moment were the discussion of a budget, a report on the status of our schools, the survey of missions, a report on meetings held with the Manitoba Synod on union, but the question of first importance was the college question. A Pastoral Conference was held at Bruderheim Sept. 7-9 at which the Rev. C. F. Walther was again present to give wise counsel and encouragement. The main item of business was to explore the best method by which the selection of the place and the site of the college could be presented to Pres. F. Pfotenhauer and Mr. H. Horst who had been delegated by the Board of Directors of the General Body to decide the vexed question, since both Sask. and Alberta were anxious to have it in their midst. The question had many angles but revolved around the proposition: is it of primary importance to have the college in the approximate geographical centre of the then developed West, or is it more advantageous to have it in a Lutheran community in the future geographical center. To solve this question in frank discussion, the Man.-Sask. brethren had invited the Alberta Conference to meet with them at Saskatoon and there to lay the matter before Synod's representatives in joint session. However, the Alberta pastors thought it more practical, both because of the time and expense involved, to suggest a separate meeting of the Man.-Sask. brethren at Saskatoon with Synod's representatives and the Rev. A. Schwermann as Alberta's spokesman and a meeting at Edmonton of the Alberta Pastoral-Lay-delegate conference with Synod's representatives and a delegation from the sister District.

Such a meeting, the 4th pre-synodical conference, was held at Edmonton, Nov. 13-15, 1920, to take up the regular order of business, but above all to discuss the location of the college. Rev. A. Schwermann, then pastor at Wetaskiwin, read a lengthy paper prepared by himself and a committee, in which he marshalled all facts which spoke for Edmonton. The matter was fully and fairly discussed with a view of finding the best possible location in the West for

a Canadian college. The lay delegates in a special session bound themselves to support the institution and to help raise the \$22,000 which the Western church had promised for the college (just as Sask. had) no matter where the institution would finally be located. Synod's representatives heard the arguments, inspected possible sites in Edmonton; but withheld action until the matter could be presented to the Board of Directors. In December of that year the official notification was received that Edmonton had been chosen.

Another matter of first importance discussed at this meeting was the re-opening of our schools. This problem was vigorously taken hold of by electing a committee, which was empowered to interview the Department of Education and seek permission and if refused to initiate a test case in the courts of Alberta. Reports on missions showed progress at many points, especially in the Peace River where the Rev. W. Walther, the first resident missionary, following the exploratory work by Pastor R. Sheppard in 1919 and 1920, had opened a number of promising stations. Alberta at this time had 12 self-supporting and 33 supported congregations and 78 stations, 34 pastors, 6,500 souls and 3,000 communicants. This was gratifying progress and brought to mind Superintendent C. F. Walther's words of 1911: "If we can only hold on a few years longer, we shall hold the field, by the help of God."

On Sunday, Nov. 14, a Reformation service was held in which Pres. F. Pfotenhauer delivered the sermon before an audience of 700. This was a memorable day for Pres. F. Pfotenhauer, since he had preached his inaugural sermon at Fergus Falls, Minn., on that very day 40 years before. This convention was memorable also, because it was the first time at a public gathering that he was addressed as Doctor F. Pfotenhauer, the title having been bestowed on him by the faculty at St. Louis at just that time.

When on Monday afternoon, Nov. 15, this momentous meeting was brought to a close with a service of praise and prayer, all present, pastors and laymen, felt that an important chapter of the 27 years of blessing had been written into the pages of the Lutheran Church in Alberta and that by the grace of God a still more blessed era would begin in 1921, when the conference would meet as the Alberta and British Columbia District.

So passed the war years, years critical indeed for the infant church, years which threatened to devastate the beautiful garden of the Lord which was just coming into bearing. "The floods truly were lifted up, yea the floods lifted up their voice, the floods lifted

up their waves, yet the Lord on High was mightier than the voice of many waters." The youthful church in carrying on her God-given task lived to learn that "God was in the midst of her, she was not moved. God helped her and that right early." The church, however, not only weathered the storm, but she had ridden it out safely, indeed, made headway in the very teeth of the storm. She had established herself more firmly on the Western plains and mountains, "had lengthened her cords and strengthened the stakes" and in all the turmoil of the times had made far-reaching preparations for extension and expansion so that, when the Master in the midst of the storm and sea had spoken His almighty: "Peace be still" and there was a great calm, the frail bark of the Alberta church was seen safely riding the sea to new conquests and victories.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE HOMESTEAD ESTABLISHED

1921 - 1931

When the western settlers filed on their homesteads, there rose up in their mind's eye the vision of a home. During all the years of heartbreaking and backbreaking drudgery, during all the seasons of cold and heat, success and reverses, one reality beckoned them on—they saw the raw, stubborn prairies and woodlands melt into fertile fields of waving grain, the assortment of thatch-covered, makeshift sheds and shanties transform into well-built barns and the primitive log hut evolve into a comfortable home. This hope buoyed them up and urged them on as they bent their backs to the discouraging, never-ending task of subduing the earth. Describe, if you will, his joy and satisfaction, when the settler after years of planning and plowing, striving and stinting, settles down to a well-equipped, productive farmstead, where he can live in peace and plenty with his family, all past privation forgotten in the thrill of planning additional improvements as God shall prosper him.

This phase of homesteading has a counterpicture in the development of the Kingdom of God in the West. When endeavoring to establish the church on the plains and parklands of the West, the church of Alberta passed through successive stages of development. From the days of small things, when one lone worker was turning the sod of a virgin country and sowing the seed of the Gospel, on through the years of enlarged fields where soul-harvests were ripening under the smiling skies of God's grace, through all the disheartening years of unrest and war when ruin threatened, the church was permitted to see ever greater harvest returns and ever brighter prospects of the fruition of all her hopes and prayers.

During the years 1917-20 congregations and stations had grown numerically and spiritually, thanks to the faithful nurture of the Word of God through which alone God's work can prosper. The Christian members were taught by precept and example what constitutes true Christianity and how a Christian congregation should function and carry on its God-assigned work in its own midst. In addition, the congregations so built up, were made to realize that they are to be a city set on a hill in Alberta and British Columbia to shed its light far and wide. They learned that, as they had been the beneficiaries, favored and fostered and fed by the Christians of Minnesota, so they should become a blessing to others in the Northwest. The Laydelegate conferences of 1917-20 had contributed very

substantially to an enlarged vision of and a zeal for missions and when the year 1921 came, the youthful church, now composed of 12 self-supporting and 33 subsidized congregations plus 92 stations, served by 30 pastors, was ready to go forward in the name of the Lord and to establish its own household with the generous help of the Mother Synod.

This happy event—it was the organization of the 25th District of the Missouri Synod—took place June 30-July 6, 1921, in Immanuel Lutheran Church (Pastor A. J. Mueller) Calgary, in the



Rev. A. J. Mueller, first president of the District.

presence of and with the advice of the Rev. Bernthal, Vice-Pres. of the Missouri Synod, representing Dr. F. Pfothenhauer; the Rev. C. F. Dietz, Chairman of the General Board of Missions of the same synod; Dr. F. Fuerbringer of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo; Pres. H. Meyer of the Minnesota District; and Superintendent of Missions in Canada, the Rev. C. F. Walther, whose indefatigable zeal and unquenchable faith had been instrumental in the hands of God to bring about this happy result. Organization was proceeded with along traditional lines by choosing the Rev. A. J. Mueller president and director of missions, the Rev. A. Schwermann, 1st Vice-Pres., the Rev. C. Thies, 2nd Vice-Pres., the Rev. R. Holtzen, Secretary and Mr.

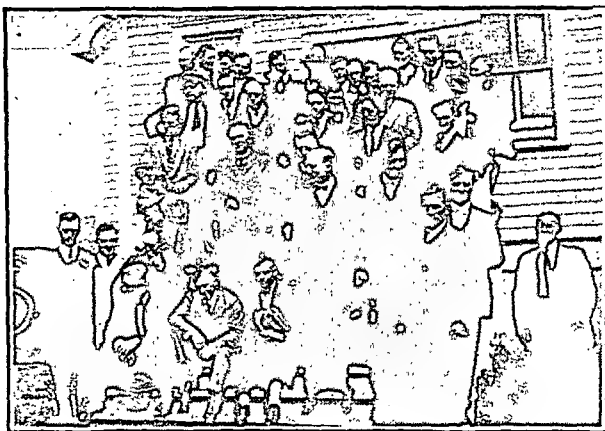
Jacob Miller, Treasurer, and by setting up the necessary commissions and committees to take over the many duties of such a body. Thus, by the grace of God, within the space of 27 years, the seed sown by Pastor Eberhardt and his brother missionaries had grown to a tree the branches of which reached from the Peace River in the North to the American boundary and from the borders of Saskatchewan to the shores of the Pacific. It was plainly the Lord's doing—who could doubt it?—and that our souls know right well.

With the wishes and prayers of the Mother Synod and with faith in the Word which never fails, the youthful church set out on untried paths along which lay many problems. Fortunately the pre-convention conferences had already pointed the way and had acquainted the officers with methods and machinery, but difficult problems remained to be solved. There was the one of welding the congregations into a co-operating organism which could and would assume the duties in the newly established household. There was the problem of financing the undertaking which would be done, in part by increased contributions from the participating congregations and to the major extent by the treasury of the General Body. There was the problem of directing the large number of mission stations now on the roster and of expanding the mission fields as yet untouched. All this and much more had to be done at a time when the world and our country was readjusting its economic life after a long and enervating war; at a time, too, when a post-war slump in general and meagre crops in particular were occupying the people. However, the same Lord who had so signally been with His church for good during the war years and before continued to lead, guide and encourage the leaders and gave the courage to carry on.

A detailed account of all that was done during the next decade, when the District was sowing on larger fields and building greater barns, must wait the pen of a historian; however, a running account of some of the main events, as recorded officially, will serve to bring back those days and engender an appreciation of the blessings which the Lord continued to show His church.

The primary duty of the youthful church was to develop the large mission field, which the Rev. C. F. Walther had characterized as "the most important in the whole synod". There were at that time 25 parishes under the care of the board, and these were distributed here, there and everywhere in 8,000,000 square miles of the provinces. To supply their needs \$14,999 was necessary, of which the District was able to contribute only \$2,435. Five of the parishes had no resident pastor and the director of missions, the Rev. A. J.

Mueller, had to make provision for supply. It is not surprising to read in his first report: "New fields could not be explored because of the lack of missionaries." However, the work proceeded apace, for in the report of 1923 Pres. A. Mueller could say that the number of



A District convention at Stony Plain in 1925, with Dr. Fr. Brandt as Synodical representative.

subsidized stations was 102, 3,878 souls, 1,626 communicants; and in 1924 the records show 124 stations, 4,795 souls, 1,781 communicants, an increase of 22 stations, 917 souls and 155 communicants. British-Columbia was coming to the fore in those years. Under the intense missionary activity of Pastor C. C. Janzow, who came there in 1923, the Kootenays heard the sound of the Gospel at a dozen or more places. The cost of missions rose sharply from \$17,688 in 1922-23 to \$23,323 in 1923-24, nearly all of it supplied by the treasury of the General Body. When the District came to its 5th milestone the following statistics were submitted: 32 parishes, 24 pastors and 2 students, 5,889 souls, 2,253 communicants, 160 congregations and stations. The amount necessary to carry on this work amounted to \$35,247. The Lord continued to bless the endeavors of the church continually so that by the 10th year the board could report these comparative statistics: 1921—6,939 souls; 1931—11,128 souls; 1921—3,079 communicants; 1931—4,961 communicants.

These figures are indeed cold reading and do not give an insight into the work. A few items will give a picture of the varied work of the church. In the Peace River country, the Rev. Walther was serving 10 stations. In November 1924 the Rev. R. Sheppard began services in the newly organized mission in Edmonton where a



canvass by the pastor and students had found 718 unchurched. Noon-day Lenten services were held at Calgary. St. Peter's, Edmonton, opened a school and called a teacher. The Rev. H. Kuring, appointed travelling missionary, began a number of places in and near Prince George, B.C. In the synodical meeting of 1927 it was resolved to call a Superintendent of Missions. In 1926 Pastors C. Pfotenhauer and W. Werning made a trip into the Cariboo and opened a large territory hitherto untouched. The Rev. H. Kuring made a 5,500 mile trip to Alaska and began work there in 1927. A beginning was made during Oct. 1926 with broadcasting. In 1927 the District was honored by a visit of Dr. F. Pfotenhauer and Dr. F. Pieper who lectured at the synodical meeting on "The Power of the Gospel". In Edmonton, St. Peter's congregation built a house of worship in 1928 and Grace Lutheran in 1938. In 1930 the first of our churches in the Peace River district was dedicated at Sexsmith. Thus on and on, but these items suffice to indicate that the young District had not been static but was, by the grace of God, permitted to reach out into ever-widening fields.

#### CARING FOR THE STRANGER WITHIN OUR GATES

A problem closely allied to the mission work, in fact one phase of it, was the care for immigrants who were coming into the West in increasing numbers. The outbreak of the war in 1914 had halted the inflow and reduced the volume of immigration to a mere drop. However, no sooner had peace come than settlers again arrived. One is reminded of the Rev. C. F. Walther's words in 1919: "True, immigration has ceased but it will return, even if it should take 5 or even 10 years. But what are ten years in the life of the church." In 1920 there arrived 38,000; in 1923—133,000; in 1926—135,000. In 1928—164,000 came to Canada to find peace and a home far away from the troubled countries of Europe.

Fully alive to the duty of the church and to the mission possibilities in this movement, in which there were thousands of Lutherans, the mission board under the aggressive leadership of Pastor C. Thies and Prof. W. Baepler took immediate steps to provide for the reception and settlement of these strangers. They were encouraged and personally assisted by Dr. F. Pfotenhauer, who remembered the tragic neglect of incoming settlers from 1904 onward. In those early years the church, surprised by the sudden onrush of settlers, had done no more to meet the problem than to let the settlers come, scatter over the landscape and then try to find them. In the years 1920-30 the church had been providentially established and had its eyes opened to the God-given opportunity. When immigration began, an organization

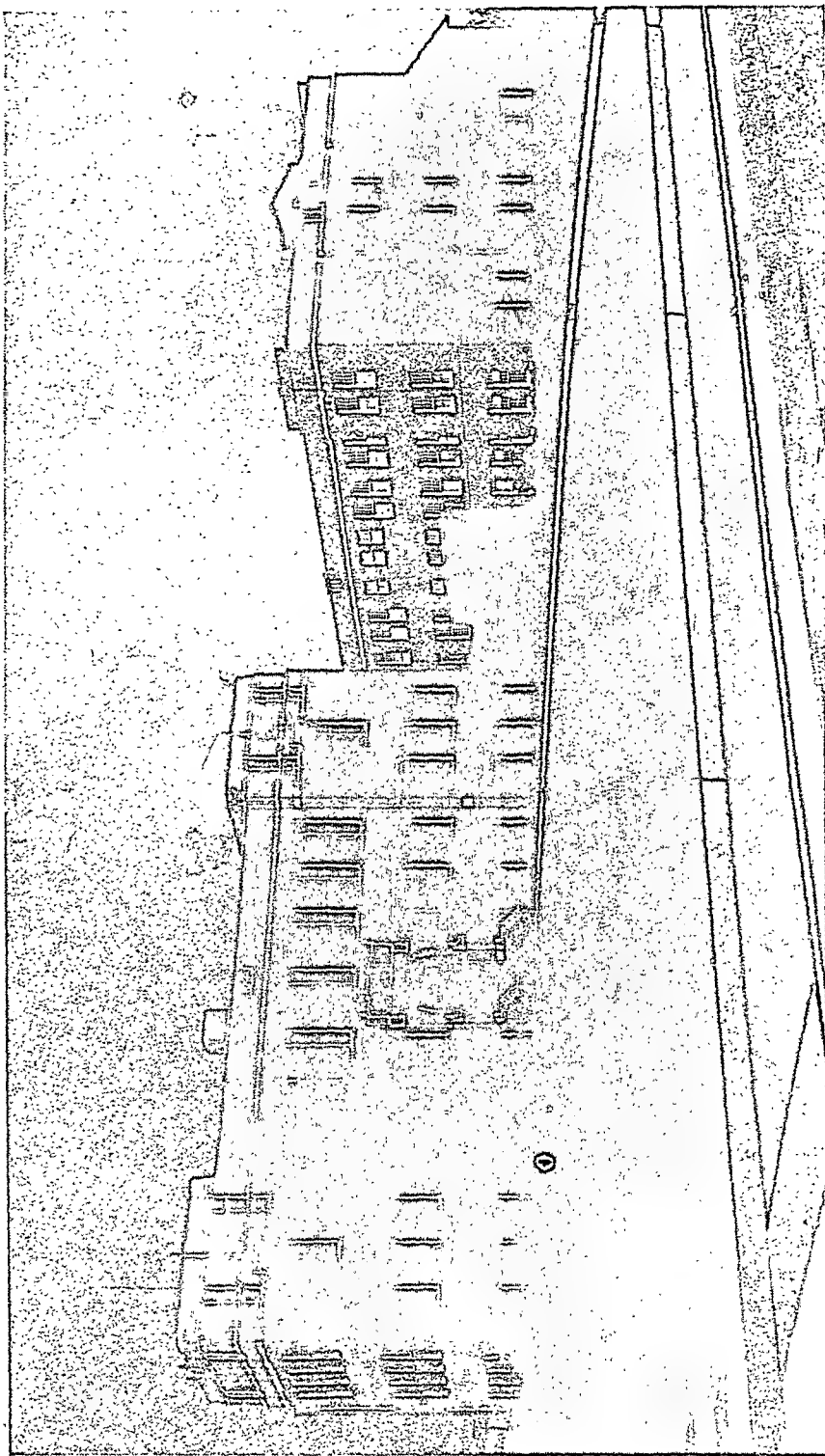
was effected, over the opposition of many, for the reception and distribution of the immigrants, either at the point of debarkation or at Winnipeg. When the settlers arrived they were taken in hand and given free advice and personal assistance and care, so that they were not only guarded against exploitation, but were protected against their own folly of settling by "hap and hazard" all over the West. They were directed to existing congregations or to stations in the process of being set up, so that they could get established in a material way and at the same time kept within the church. A great deal of time, patience and money was expended in this immigrant welfare work, which included settlement, relief and after-care. Prof. W. Baepler made a trip to Europe in the interest of this work, and Pastor Thies with two lay assistants worked early and late to see the newcomer well taken care of both spiritually and materially.

The system of selection and direction of the immigrants functioned in this way. When the immigrant who had been interviewed and given information overseas, left Europe, the Immigration Missionary Rev. John E. Herzer at Winnipeg would be advised by cable. The newcomers were met at the harbor or at Winnipeg, the Gateway to the West, and interviewed to learn their wishes, to give advice, to attend to their bodily and spiritual needs, sent to their destination, and the respective pastor was advised of the hour of the arrival. In Alberta Pastor Thies and his organization had made arrangements months earlier for the settlers' reception. Committees had been organized in most of the parishes who under the direction of their pastor would list settlement opportunities, select and make ready houses and in case of refugees, make credit arrangements to pay for their transportation. When these committees were advised of the date and train on which the family would arrive, they would be on hand to welcome the strangers and look after their first needs in order to get them established as soon as possible, thus relieving the newcomer of much anxiety. The progress of each settler was watched, and if re-settlement was indicated, this was done. The object of this welfare work was not only to facilitate the journey of the settler and to get him permanently settled, but to give him after-care until he could make his way alone. This after-care became necessary especially after 1930, when the new settler fell on evil days due to unemployment and the general depression which engulfed the country. During these years 70 tons of clothing and many relief loans were dispensed from supplies and monies furnished by the International Walther League and the Board of Relief of the Synod.

The statistics of those years show that this "directed and or-

ganized immigration policy" under the auspices of the mission board brought many settlers into our churches at Kamloops, Manville, Craig-myle, the Okanagan and other points. The mission report of 1930 speaks of a gain of 2,000 in two years. The care of and concern for the stranger did not only benefit the settler materially and spiritually, but it saved the church much effort and money which would have been required to seek out and serve them had the settlers been permitted to settle haphazardly, often on a mere whim. Who knows how many souls were kept with the church or brought into it, who otherwise would have been lost. This work of charity and missions was richly blessed by the Lord of the church who is "a father of the widow and fatherless and loveth the stranger," Deut. 10, 18, and commands: "Love thou the stranger, for you were strangers in the land".

It is generally admitted that the projects mentioned were sufficiently onerous for the back of so young an organization. However, other responsibilities thrust themselves on the attention of the District. There was the establishment of a Western Canadian Concordia. The General Synod in 1920 resolved, on the petition of the Western churches, to open such a school and had voted a grant of \$125,000, and the congregations of Western Canada had promised an additional \$22,000. Institutions of this kind are the property of the General Body, but the care and management is in the hands of local boards. The Board of Directors had definitely selected Edmonton in 1924, and at the first synod in Calgary in 1921 the Rev. A. Schwermann had been chosen and called as president of the college. The opening of the school was set for Oct. 31, 1921, and it became necessary for the Board of Control to select and rent buildings and attend to hundreds of details. Later, when the site had been chosen and the erection of the building had been sanctioned, the local board had to supervise the intricate details connected with the project. Under the direction of this board the undertaking went forward and on July 5th, 1925, the cornerstone was laid; and on Jan. 10, 1926, at the time of the meeting of an All-Western Conference of pastors the building was dedicated. Rev. Buegel, the first resident pastor in Manitoba, and the Rev. E. Eberhardt preached on this occasion, and Mr. H. Horst, representative of the Board of Directors, delivered an address. By this time the college had already been in operation 4 years with a staff of four professors: Pres. A. Schwermann since the fall of 1921; Prof. A. Rehwinkel, 1922; Prof. W. Baepler, 1923; and Prof. J. Herreilers, 1924. In 1926 the institution became a fullfledged junior college. Thus was another problem successfully solved by the good hand of God.

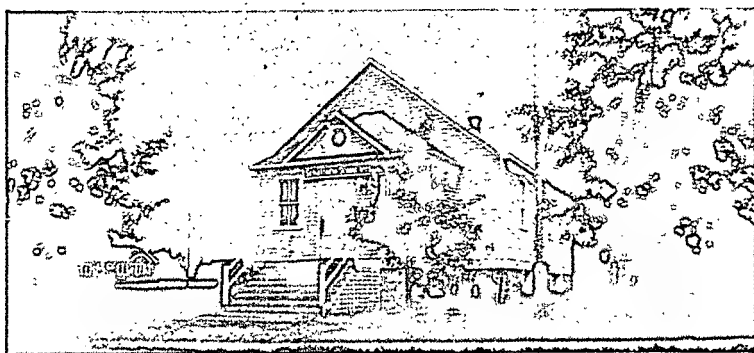


Concordia College, Edmonton, dedicated 1926.

But another matter of importance awaited the action and disposition of the District. During the years of stress in War I all Christian day schools, some taught by pastors, others by teachers, were closed by the Department of Education. Because it was not deemed wise to make an issue of the matter at the time, the congregations suffered the injustice in silence. However, when the war had come to a close and more peaceful times followed, the congregation at Stony Plain, believing the time to be sufficiently normal, decided to re-open their school, after having secured legal advice and after having advised the Department of its proposed action. Pastor H. Boettcher, a graduate of the Normal School at Camrose, was called and was instructed to conduct the school "within the provisions of the School Ordinance and in the spirit of our religion".

The school was re-opened on Aug. 22, 1921, with 29 pupils. During the latter part of October the Chief Inspector from Edmonton officially inspected the school, but offered no criticism. A week later a letter from the Deputy Minister arrived with the bare statement that the school had been declared "inefficient", but even then no suggestion as to how to arrange the curriculum to make the school acceptable. Nor did a personal interview produce any constructive advice. All efforts to adjust the difficulty by personal interviews were fruitless. The Minister of Education, the Hon. Perrin Baker, however, gave the committee the assurance that he would see to it that they would not be prosecuted. Several days later 22 fathers at Stony Plain received summons and in April, 1922; were fined \$2 plus \$1.50 costs which was paid under protest.

On the advice of a competent lawyer steps were taken to have the matter appealed as a test case. The matter was heard by the Supreme Court of Alberta in November, 1922, and on Dec. 12 the court handed



St. Matthew's, Stony Plain, school No. 2, opened in 1924.

down an adverse decision, which declared that the province had absolute control over all children in the matter of education. Supreme Court Justice N. D. Beck dissenting. Appeal was again made to the Hon. Perrin Baker for redress, but in vain.

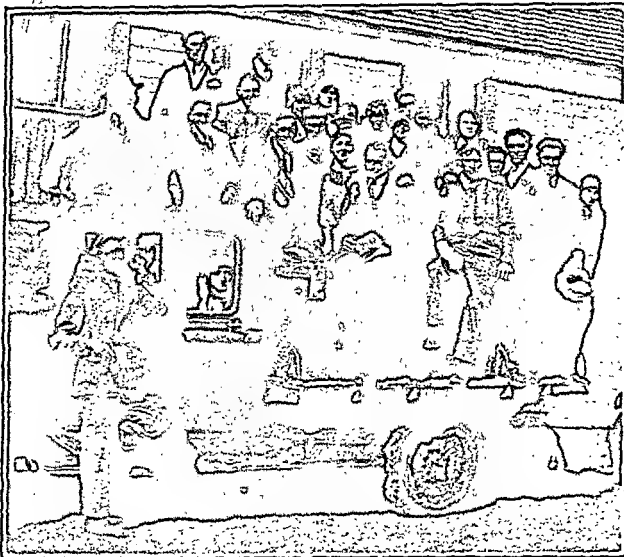
The members of St. Matthew's church who loved their school were stunned by the "tyrannical application of the law" and after weighing the matter carefully decided to send a committee consisting of the Rev. E. Eberhardt, Jacob Miller and Henry Goertz to Mexico for the purpose of finding a place where they could have full enjoyment of religious liberty in respect to the education of their children. Thereupon Mr. T. O. F. Herzer of Calgary brought the seriousness of the matter to the attention of Mr. Henry Wise Wood, president of the United Farmers of Alberta, the party then in power, who together with Mr. Herzer made representations to the government in order to find a solution for this intolerable situation. Thereupon Premier Greenfield, in April, 1922, advised the school board that our schools would not further be molested if they continued their efficiency. On April 10th, the day before the committee returned from Mexico, the school at Stony Plain was opened amid the offering of thanks to God, who had so visibly demonstrated that He still rules the hearts of men. When the first school term closed and examination returns were in, the "inefficient school" was by 41% more efficient than the most efficient school in that district.

The battle was won as it pertained to the school at Stony Plain, but the whole question of education was not clarified. To effect this, efforts were made to have the school law changed and to "expunge the tyrannous provision". The amendment was rejected, but on March 27, 1924, the Minister, Hon. Perrin Baker, wrote: "I want to assure you once more that if you will conduct your schools as you are now conducting the Stony Plain school, that is, follow the course of study and time schedule outlined by the Department, we will not interfere with your school, whether you have qualified teachers or not. You will understand, of course, that it will be easier for you to conduct a satisfactory school with a qualified teacher". Right having been vindicated and the status of our schools having been assured the schoolboard agreed to let the matter rest. It was later admitted by the inspector who had conjured up the difficulty, that "they realize now that the whole Stony Plain school trouble might have been avoided, had they followed a different course of procedure . . . They must insist upon a certain standard of efficiency, but if any of the schools failed to reach that standard, they would get in touch with our school

board and co-operate with us and give us ample time to make it efficient”.

The school board immediately set about to benefit by this arrangement and to open efficient schools by calling graduates from our Teachers' colleges, who would then take a course in the Alberta Normal Schools. When the smoke of the battle cleared away, our schools were in a stronger position, and the young church had learned again the useful lesson written in her history: “The Lord omnipotent reigneth and the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water, He turneth it withersoever He will”.

While battling for the Christian education of her children, the church was permitted to see another department of education of the youth growing silently and unnoticed. Inspired by Pastor W. Luke, the Alberta and British Columbia District of the Walther League was organized July 5, 1924, at the time of our synod at Bruderheim. Representatives of Walther League societies taking part were Mellowdale, Stony Plain, Calgary, Alhambra, Brightview, Edmonton, Lethbridge, and Magrath. With the Rev. C. Thies as president, Pastor C. Pfotenhauer, Vice-Pres., Miss K. Singer, Sec., and Miss H. Enders, Treas., the organization got under way. Under the enthusiastic leadership of Pastor W. Luke this movement developed extraordinarily fast during the twenties. The young people responded with their usual enthusiasm, and other societies came into the organization. With good



A group of Walther Leaguers bound for a popular zone rally.

Christian judgment and knowledge of the needs of young people, the leaders laid down an all-around program for Lutheran young peoples' societies which has been the standard to this day. It stressed Christian knowledge in the first place, which means Bible study. Second, "Doing" in the form of Christian service in all its departments, at home and abroad. Third, it furnished Christian recreation and entertainment. On the basis of these activities the program of the societies and District was built. Popular features in those days were the conferences, of which two were held every winter, one in the north and the other in the south; and the annual conventions. Even at that early date we find annual summer camps, beginning at Seba Beach and then transferring to Edmonton Beach. The zeal of the League in those days may be measured by the ambitious undertaking of establishing in Edmonton the first Hospice in Canada, which during the time of immigration gave shelter to many needy immigrant.

One more project of those days may be mentioned. Late in 1924 there appeared a church paper edited by the Concordia faculty under the name of "Our Church". Its purpose was to bring information of the work of the church to the widely separated congregations, encourage joint work in missions and other endeavors of the church and to bind together the Christians in their common faith and interests.

However to recount all the acts and activities recorded in the annals of that period, many of which had a bearing on the immediate and future development of God's homestead, would be impossible. These will show that the twenties were busy years indeed and confronted the leaders as well as the rank and file of the church with problems, the solution of which strained their resourcefulness and courage of faith. That they were solved at all is due not to any man's ingenuity and adroitness, but only to the help and constant leading of God, who supplied wisdom, strength and courage from on High for every day's need. Step by step the church experienced this truth:

His hand is never shortened  
All things must serve His might,  
His every act is blessing,  
His path is purest light,  
His work no man can hinder,  
His purpose none can stay,  
Since He to bless His children  
Will always find a way.



Tho' all the powers of evil  
The will of God oppose,  
His purpose will not falter,  
His purpose onward goes.  
Whate'er God's will resolveth,  
Whatever He intends,  
Will always be accomplished  
True to His aims and ends.

Thus passed the years of planning and building, of toiling and praying; the days of economic readjustment and the world's endeavor to rebuild on the ruins of the past. And the church lived in that world; but when the end of that period came, the church was standing again at its EBENEZER and had carved on it anew: "Hitherto hath the Lord helped." 1 Sam 7, 12.

## CHAPTER VI.

### DROUGHT — DEPRESSION — AND WAR

1931 - 1946

We have followed the fortunes of the erstwhile homesteader and have seen him established on his "proved up" homestead. After years of struggle he has wrested a farm and a home from the wilderness and sits back in satisfaction and security to enjoy the reward of his labors and to plan further development and improvements. Years of plenty and progress follow, and he is inclined to say to his soul: "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry", when there come seasons and years which try his mettle and threaten to wipe out all past progress and future prospects. He has borne up under the slow battle with the soil but now there steals up on him an enemy ruthless and implacable. Under favorable soil and weather conditions he has seeded his acres and is awaiting the earth to bring forth fruit of herself, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. Days of benign sunshine follow, growing warmer, hotter every day. The sun blazes down with increasing fury. Man, beast and fields pant for relief and tender plants begin to droop. Days of cloudless skies follow, heaven becomes as brass. Hot winds sough over the land sucking up thirstily, relentlessly the last vestige of moisture. Winds blow unceasingly increasing in violence. With greedy fingers they claw at the soil whirling aloft great clouds of dust which enshroud the earth and blot out the sun. And the "noise of chariots is heard in the land" as the scourge of ages, swarms of grasshoppers swoop down on the land, march on their way without breaking rank, devour the last spear of green and leave the country a desert. Such were the years in Canada, when bank failures, business bankruptcies, and crop failures brought on the "Depression of the Thirties" and untold misery, and swept away the savings and fortunes which years of plenty had laid up.

The Lutheran Church of Alberta lived through those years, and those years did not leave her untouched, indeed, but for the grace of God the work of the church would have been retarded and stunted in growth.

The years of 1920-30 had in the main been fruitful ones for the Church in Alberta. The Church had gone forward all along the line with gratifying speed. The organization had been perfected, mission work had expanded. The college was filled with students

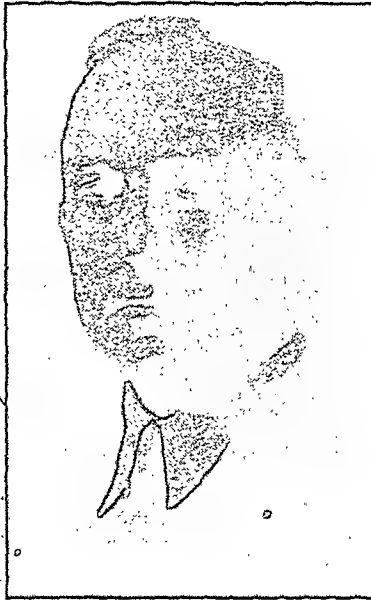
preparing for work in the District and several graduates had already begun to labor. The danger threatening the Christian day school had been averted by the interposition of the Lord. Immigration was bringing in thousands of settlers who were enlarging our congregations and the number of stations. Work in British Columbia was widening its influence—then in 1929 came the dreadful crash, coupled with unprecedented drought and grasshopper plagues and then—the Second World War in 1939! The black horse of famine of the Apocalypse joined by the red horse of war which rode rough-shod in all his fury and frenzy over all that man had built, fortunately for the Church, however, under the control of Him who sat on the white horse and went forth conquering and to conquer. Rev. 6, 1f.

Those years were indeed severe enough on the members of our Church who were already established on their farm and in their home. Dry years made farming a heart-breaking work. They sowed hopefully and brought in little, they looked for much and lo it came to little, often not enough to fetch from the fields. Even the little, which they brought in had no price, so that farmers often shipped a carload of wheat and did not realize enough to pay for the shipping. The net value of wheat was \$5.40 an acre and the total cost to produce it \$8.70, leaving a net loss of \$3.30. If, however, the lot of the rural members was hard who will describe the specter of unemployment and hunger in the cities. Men literally begged for something to do; and if they did earn wages, it was as if they put them into a bag with holes. Most pitiable and hopeless and serious, however, was the lot of the immigrant, who had come penniless from Europe after the horrors of the First World War in order to establish himself and find a haven and a home in a land of plenty, only to have the world tumble down around him again before he had taken root.

In a setting such as this we find the Church in this decade. She had had just ten years to set her house in order and till her acres. Then came years of economic stress. It was truly a time of testing, and the Church was made to show whether she had learned to put her trust in her Lord who had sent her out with the command: "Go" backed by the promise: "Lo, I am with you, ALWAYS." His presence had been evident in the continued success of the past, she had now to go out into the darkness and put her hand into the hand of God. "That was to be for her better than a light and safer than a known way." Forward she went, trustfully doing the work God had given her to do while it was day, even tho it was an evil day. She had no time to falter, no time to sit down and measure

and weigh out her resources against the task. There was work to do, and strength from on High to do it.

There was first of all the work of missions; 130 subsidized stations where more than 7,000 souls in days such as these were in need more than ever of the Word of Life and of Comfort. A shortage of 6 missionaries made the work harder, for 38 pastors had to take care of 47 parishes. Pres. W. C. Eifert, who had relieved the Rev. A. J. Mueller in 1930, and his Board consisting of Revs. C. Thies, K. Wentzel, W. Werning, and Prof. Baepfer set themselves the task not only of holding the gains previously made, but of venturing out into new fields. At first the work proceeded normally on the momentum of the twenties, but when the depression deepened and the welter of



Rev. W. C. Eifert, president of the  
District since 1930.

disorganized business, unemployment and crop failure made its full impact felt, the problem became more difficult as the months wore on. There was a loss in stations in 1932, but soon under the blessing of God the number of stations increased to 140 and the number of missionaries to 45 then to 50. Realizing that the Lord's work must go on, the District increased its facilities and called the Rev. C. Thies as Director of Missions. It is cheering to note that under his leadership a thoro canvass was made in new fields in order to reach more

and more people at a time when business houses were retrenching by calling in their salesmen. The salesmen of the Gospel, working for the Lord whose work is unaffected by depression and hard times, carried their Gospel wares farther and farther, to more and more people.

All this called for funds and more funds; and the young District, whose income had dropped steadily, because its members were suffering under the depression, would have been forced to release its workers, as did many a factory and business concern, had not the Mother Synod carried the burden of the struggling daughter. How critical the situation was, appears from a case such as this. The requirements for 1931 for Alberta and Alaska were \$44,500, while the congregations collected only \$6,396. To the glory of God, who gave the willingness, and as an appreciation of the generosity of our brethren in the United States it is here recorded that during the depression years the Missouri Synod supplied the needs of the Alberta field in the amount of \$368,000 for the period of 1930-40. This was done at a time when the United States was suffering a similar or even deeper depression, at a time too, when the Missouri Synod was facing a deficit of over one million dollars. How great the goodness of God, when humanly speaking, the Alberta District would have been forced to retrench to the point of closing most of its missions, that our fellow Christians were willing to sacrifice that the work might go on.

The Lord showed, too, in an unmistakable manner that this determination to go forward and "possess the land" was His doing, for the statistics show a steady and surprising gain. In the years 1931 there were 11,128 souls and 4,961 communicants at 116 stations, served by 41 pastors. In 1940, wonderfully to relate, there were 50 pastors, 118 stations, 13,399 souls and 6,977 communicants. Another evidence of God's blessing is given in the reports which show that 10 Christian day schools with 253 pupils were maintained during those years. Or again, note the list of churches dedicated during this period: 1930 Sexsmith, first church in the Peace River; 1931—St. Paul's at Hines Creek; 1932—at Northmark; 1933—St. Peter's at Hines Creek; 1934—Bruce, Alta., Kelowna and Oliver, B.C.; 1935 Craigmyle, 1936—School at Lavesta, 1937—Kamloops and New Westminster; 1938—Bruderheim; 1939 Mellowdale; 1941—Craig, Rochester and Tomahawk. Wonderful blessings, that God should make His people willing and give them the means in years of want to build unto Him a house. One more evidence of God's marvellous ways of making much come out of little is furnished in the record that the

value of church properties rose from \$160,000 in 1930 to \$209,800 in 1940. It is worthy of record, too, that in the years when money was "tight" the contributions rose from \$6,369 to \$8,914, a modern example of the Old Testament miracle. 1 Kings 17,16.

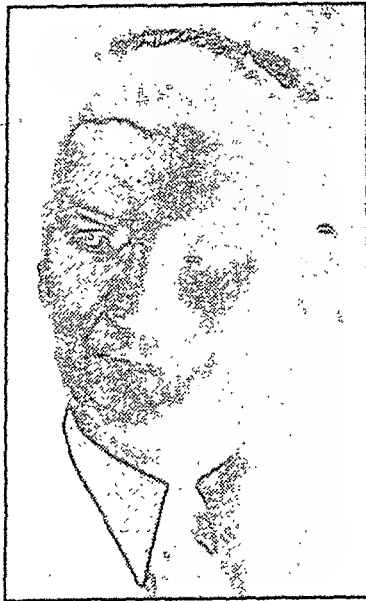
Other revealing facts appear in the expansion in the British Columbia field. British Columbia had for many years been a field of small gains and slow growth. Two, three, at most four missionaries sufficed to serve the field. In the late twenties, due to the influx of thousands into the province, more missionaries had been placed there and the number grew during the depression. Immigration and especially migrations due to the drought and new industries brought 207,000 into the province, among them many Lutherans, so that 14 missionaries were needed to look after their spiritual needs.

In addition to these endeavors for the extension of the mission fields we find the church busy with building up the inner life by indoctrination of both old and young.

An educational agency which originated in the conditions of the depression years was the establishment of a S.S. by mail. Pastors had always felt the need for more intensive religious instruction on the mission fields, but owing to the far-flung fields, some points of which could not be reached more often than once a month, the instruction of children was totally inadequate. This caused the mission board, in 1934, to begin instruction by mail. Prof. A. Guebert was made superintendent. With the help of a volunteer office staff, and later with a regular secretary and the help of teachers, he developed a systematic course of study from the primary through the confirmation class and the adult Bible class. This educational agency brought regular instruction into homes where children had no chance to attend any S.S. at all, or where only meagre instruction could be given preparatory to confirmation. The record shows that whereas on March, 1935, the enrolment was 658, on Feb., 1940, it was 943 and by March, 1945, it had risen to 1,261. No mean accomplishment for the years of depression.

But the church was to make her voice heard still further. Alert to the command: "O Zion which bringeth good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain . . . lift up thy voice with strength, say unto the cities . . . Behold your God.", she looked for a medium to say to the cities and countryside of Alberta and British Columbia: "Behold your God". The radio offered such a medium of communication. The first attempt to use this, then new, means had been made in Calgary in 1926 by Pastor W. Luke, then in Edmonton in 1928 by Pastor H. Boettcher who broadcast during the Lenten season. It was not,

however, until Nov. 18, 1934, that Pastor W. Raedeke under the auspices of the Alberta District Walther League began broadcasting regularly over CFCN. These broadcasts continued until Easter and were carried on for six months a year by the pastors of Calgary until 1940. In the fall of that year transcriptions of Dr. Walter A. Maier's sermons were introduced and have been used all the year round from that time. In Edmonton Pastor A. J. Mueller, under the sponsorship of St. Peter's Church, began using the radio in 1935 and carried on with the help of local pastors until 1940 when this station also used the accepted transcriptions. From this beginning has grown a string of other stations: Grande Prairie, Trail, Kamloops, Kelowna, Chilliwack, Vancouver and Prince George. Since the summer of 1944 all broadcasting in the West has been consolidated in the Lutheran Hour under the management of Pastor and Mrs. W. A. Raedeke at a central office in Edmonton. By this means the church has been able to preach the Gospel far and wide in homes normally not open to or reached by us; to preach the Gospel to lonely trappers and bedridden invalids. At the same time the Lutheran Church has made itself and the doctrine it professes known, removed prejudice and publicized itself as the Bible Church which brings the "unchanging Christ to a changing world".



Rev. A. H. Schwermann, B.Ed., D.D.,  
Principal of Concordia College,  
Edmonton, since 1921.

The College, at Edmonton, which is indeed an institution of the General Body suffered, as did all other agencies, under the depression. The enrolment dropped nearly 50% owing no doubt to the inability of parents to support a boy at college and to the fear of an oversupply of ministers. In spite of this discouraging outlook the faculty carried on courageously in the knowledge that "the harvest still is great and the laborers few" and not only prayed the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers, but raised the standard and laid plans to enlarge the scope of its usefulness by adopting the provincial course and by offering education on the high school level to the rank and file of our church's youth in order to rear a truly well-educated and well-indoctrinated generation for the service of the church.

Another field of applied education which was further developed during these years was young people's work. Under the auspices of the Walther League and led by inspiring leaders this youth work had made splendid progress during the twenties. Depression apparently had no adverse but, odd as it may seem, a stimulating effect on this endeavor. With youthful enthusiasm this organization did not only carry on to "keep young people within the church," but enlarged its sphere of influence through local society meetings, winter conferences and summer camps, where the study of the Bible and Christian knowledge and service were made the centre of the young peoples' lives. All this helped to soften the impact of the depression which had such disastrous effect especially on the youth. Fostered by the Board of Education of the District a series of Bible Institutes, under the supervision of Prof. A. Schwermann, were held at Concordia College. When it was learned that the influence of these institutes could be enlarged if the meetings were brought to other centres, a system of Bible Institutes, each lasting a week, were arranged in centres such as Edmonton, Bruderheim, Stony Plain, Calgary, Vernon, Vancouver, New Westminster, Chilliwack under the direction of Rev. John E. Herzer. Many other churches called for them, but no men were available who could devote their time to this blessed teaching service of the church, which soon became even more popular with adults than with the young. The depth of the depression had the effect of creating a "hunger for the Word", and the church endeavored to supply the needs with all the facilities at her command.

The Church of Alberta was saddened during this period by the death of two men whom the Lord had used to plant and nurture the Western Canadian Church. Rev. C. F. Walther was called to his rest on March 19, 1937, and Dr. F. Pfothenhauer heard his Lord's summons on October 9, 1939. No lengthy eulogy of these men would



repay the debt of gratitude which Western Canada, Alberta in particular, owes to these two servants of God. Humanly speaking the Alberta District would today not be what it is had these two benefactors not planned, worked and prayed with such zeal and love for it in the years when the mission was in its childhood and youth. To the glory of God we here erect this monument of gratitude to them for services which shall never be forgotten.

The years of depression gave rise to another movement; that of circuit meetings, which were held at a number of places, to make the members of our church better acquainted with the church and its work and to enlist them for more consecrated work in the Kingdom. Consisting of lectures on missions, finances, stewardship and practical questions, these circuit meetings gave the people a fuller understanding of the personal part every Christian ought to have in the work of the Kingdom, at home and in the world at large.

Still another instrument for good was the publication of a joint church paper for the two Western Districts, ably edited by Prof. A. Schwermann and Rev. R. Meinzen. The blessing from this venture was that of furnishing information, news and encouragement. It helped to weld our people together in unity of interest, gave them a sense of oneness of purpose and co-operation in the work in the Canadian West.

Many more smaller and greater activities of the Church might be mentioned, such as the continuation of the work in Alaska by Pastor Frieling, the celebration of the 100th anniversary of Saxon Immigration, the response of Alberta and B.C. Christians to the cry for help from the drought-stricken Saskatchewan brethren, but the recording of the above-mentioned activities will suffice to show that even after the experiences of the depression years no lasting harm had come to the Lord's homestead, which Dr. W. Arndt, following a visit there, described as "a beautiful garden in spring which promises a bountiful harvest." Even while the hand of the Lord was heavy on the land because of the iniquity of the people, and tho He permitted even His own to suffer, He let no harm come to His heritage. The church came forth chastened and purified, indeed, but strengthened and ready to be used for greater service and accomplishments.

It needed training and strengthening when the depression was easing off, for a cataclysm was impending which by its suddenness and fury shook the world to its very foundations.

On Sept. 3rd, 1939, another world war, a holocaust more horrid and horrible than the first burst upon the world, which was still in the the secondary war depression. How would the church in general, how would the church in Alberta particularly fare in this second world

upheaval? The first world war had touched the church, but good had come out of evil, by the Lord's providence. No one knew what was in store, but every Christian knew that God would not let lasting harm come to His chosen, that He could make even wars serve His purpose, if we could only still follow His leading and "know that He is God who would be exalted in the earth."

The catastrophe is of too recent an occurrence and of too painful a memory to require lengthy description. It began slowly, increased in fury and came to a crashing climax in the atomic bomb dropped on Japan.

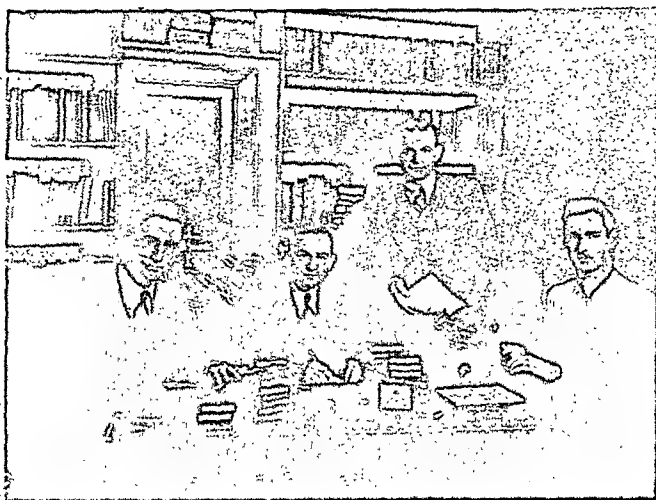
It pleased God to let our church escape the effects of the war-hysteria of the first war. It rarely had to defend itself against the libelous charge of disloyalty and on the whole it could proceed on its way undisturbed in carrying out its duty of bringing the healing Gospel. The Lutheran Church was no longer, at least not generally, regarded as a foreign church thanks to the favorable publicity which the "Lutheran Hour" had given it, as well as to the fact that a marked shift to English had taken place during the thirties and our fellow-citizens could themselves hear what our church taught and stood for; and finally to the fact that our young men and women marched shoulder to shoulder, gave life and limb for their empire's cause, proving, if proof were needed, what might have been known, that the Scriptural teaching of our church makes, in addition to faithful Christians, also loyal, law-abiding citizens. And so the Church passed thru this ordeal unscathed and could centre its attention on its mission of bringing the pardon and peace of Christ to a war-torn world.

Quite properly the church did not slacken its efforts when for the second time it found itself in the welter of a world-carnage and in a country which was converting its ways of peace to armaments of a "total war." Indeed, as loyal citizens of Canada, which was fighting for its very life, the members took a personal part in the war-efforts, but the church knew that its warfare was spiritual and come war, come peace, its mission was to bring the gospel of salvation to mankind. There was work to be done in the 81 congregations and the 128 stations, and the 51 pastors had sufficient to do. The mission fields demanded continuous and careful attention in order to build them up internally and externally. A Secretary of Missions, the Rev. V. L. Meyer had been chosen in 1939 to further this work, and the District had elected a Board of Directors in 1942 to make the organization as efficient as possible. It was especially urgent to develop the B.C. mission fields; whither migration was continuing unabated from the drought stricken prairies and was accelerating due to war-work. In Vancouver another

mission was begun, on Vancouver Island the field was extended and in the Lower Fraser Valley mission activity was intensified by the calling of another missionary. Another opportunity for soul-saving was developed when the church sent Rev. Jones with a trailer equipment to the North to serve the transient population along the Alaska Highway.

Owing no doubt in part to the return of prosperity, to the rise of employment and larger returns for farm products and general economic revival, which after the year 1940 reached the highest point in all the history of Canada, but also to the better appreciation of the duties of stewardship by our members, the contributions for the work of the church at large grew from \$8,914 in 1939 to \$43,351 in 1945 and for home purposes from \$41,755 in 1939 to \$116,265 in 1945, although the number of souls did not show any appreciable increase. The church of Alberta and B.C., after many years of nursing by the mother church, was beginning to take a greater interest and a larger share in the work of the church.

But the church had still other problems which demanded attention, one particularly, which grew out of the war conditions. When Canada rallied her forces and men and women were enlisting, the church found herself confronted with the duty of taking care of her youth while away from home in camp and on the fighting front. At first local pastors assumed this duty gladly and kept in touch with our boys and girls so long as they were in the homeland. When, however, the troops began to move forward, other means had to be found. On



The Lutheran Service Board, 1941. (l. to r.) Prof. A. Guebert, Rev. C. Klewer, Mr. Chas. Sherman, Mr. Clarence Kuhnke.

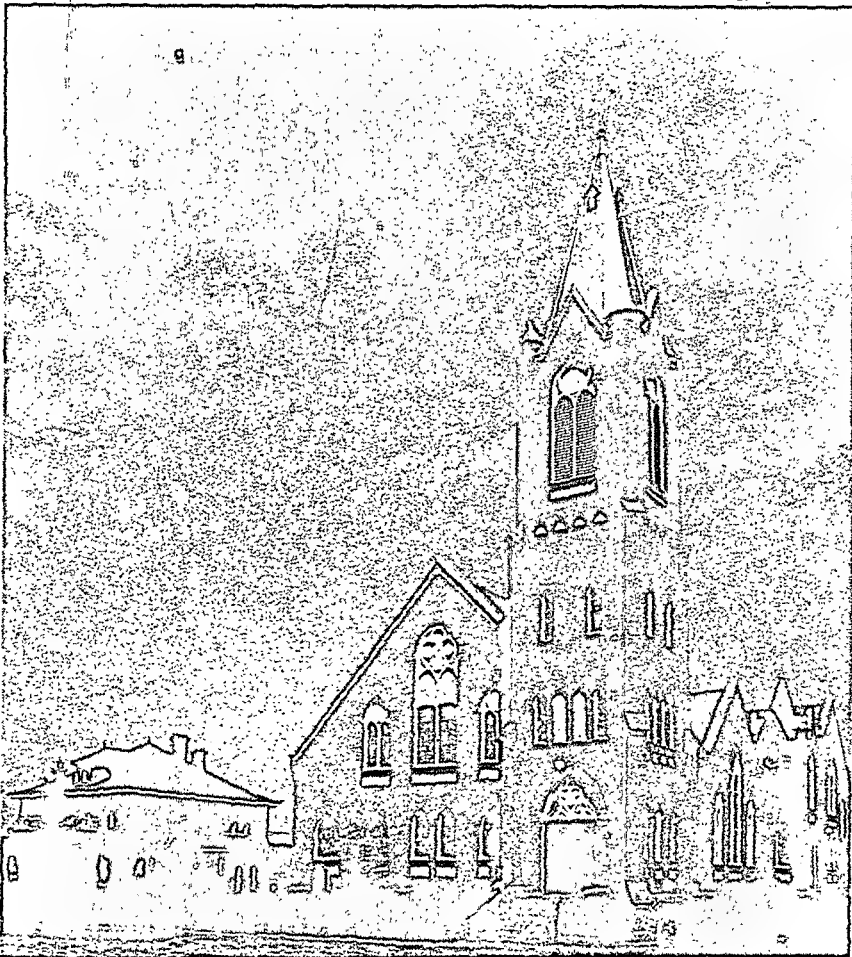
Oct. 28, 1940, Pres. J. Behnken appointed a committee in Eastern Canada to take charge. To supplement this, Pres. Eifert in August, 1941, named a sub-committee to co-operate with the Army and Navy Board in the East. Members of this Lutheran Service Board were: Rev. C. Klewer, Mr. Clarence Kuhnke, Prof. A. Guebert and Mr. Chas. Sherman. This board registered all men, supplied them with tracts, church papers, prayer books and Testaments and in other ways kept in contact with Lutheran soldiers. In March, 1942, the Rev. H. Merklinger was appointed the first Lutheran chaplain of our synod. In July, 1942, the Alberta and the Manitoba-Saskatchewan boards met and mapped out a larger program of service and asked for integration into the Board of the General Synod. In March, 1943, the Army and Navy Commission of the Missouri Synod opened an office at Winnipeg. The Rev. R. Meinzen was made Canadian Secretary and took over all the duties of soldiers' welfare. In May of that year, the Rev. Ph. Janz was appointed chaplain, and in the years following the pastors A. Otke and E. Pearce. The Alberta-B.C. District took part in all collections for soldiers' welfare, and the Walther League made special provisions to keep in touch with the boys and girls who were away from home. Thus the church in Alberta and B.C. "went with them" and did all in her power to keep her youth with Christ and the Church.

Many more tasks were before the church in those days. To enumerate all endeavors, each of which had a bearing on its life, would carry us beyond the scope of this simple story. Enough to know that God was with her and made use of her to carry out His eternal purposes.

Finally, after the agony of six years of ever-intensified bloodshed and carnage, of wreck and ruin, God, who "maketh wars to cease" brought peace to the world in 1945. The world now had the task to reconvert to pursuits of peace and to devise ways to prevent a similar holocaust. But the church was unharmed thanks to the ever-watchful eye and the almighty arm of her Saviour and Protector and was ready, no worse for the wear and the war, to assume its post-war rehabilitation of mankind by means of the Gospel of peace in Christ.

## CONCLUSION

This, in its broad outlines, is the story of God's work in Alberta and British Columbia, a story of a half-century of leading, guiding, guarding and blessing. After an insignificant beginning, the church grew slowly, but established itself sufficiently so that at the end of the period outposts had been occupied in the north, the centre and the south, preparatory to the greater advance in the next decade. With the inrush of settlers, after 1900, the growth was accelerated and reached a pace, which was not conducive, if long sustained, to the development of a well-indoctrinated and solidly built church.



The newly acquired church and parsonage of Jehovah congregation in Calgary (1945); Rev. Ph. Unterschultz, pastor.

The First World War in the third decade checked the outward growth slightly, but gave the missionaries the opportunity to consolidate the gains by building up the congregations internally and developing a sense of unity and action with sister congregations. This led naturally to joint endeavors and eventually to the formation of a synodical District.

The next period was one of welding the congregations into an operating and co-operating body well equipped to take over the direction and development of its own field. Not much time was allowed to perfect the organization. Many new and vexing problems such as coping with a new wave of immigration, opening a college, establishing Christian day schools, etc., occupied the full attention of the young District.

The next period was a trying one, by reason of the severe financial and economic disturbance. But by the grace of God even this redounded to its advantage, by giving the District the opportunity to exercise its faith and God-given strength in venturing out into the deep "to let down its nets." Even the catastrophe of another and more virulent World War was not able to check the steady progress of the Gospel, so that when the sun of peace arose on a darkling world, the church stood there "mid toil and tribulation and tumult of the war" unharmed, prepared to take up any post-war problems which the Lord saw fit to entrust to her.

#### WHO KNOWETH NOT IN ALL THIS THAT THE HAND OF GOD HAS WROUGHT ALL THIS?

Looking forward, the Church in Alberta and B.C. dare not think the victory won. She must not fail to see with eyes of faith the same Christ leading, leading on to yet greater conquests and victories. She knows not what lies ahead, nor need she; let her look back into her history, see the footsteps of her Lord, "thank God and take courage." Great tasks and opportunities lie ahead. There is yet much land to be possessed. The Lord's Homestead is not yet fully cultivated and improved. The sun of grace has not yet gone down on the world's day, but the evening shadows are lengthening, and she has work to do and must do it while it is day before the night cometh—and rest.

For whatever task awaits her, may there always stand before her eyes the truth written so large on every page of her history: "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground . . . and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how."

## THE ROSTER OF PASTORS AND TEACHERS IN THE ALBERTA AND BRITISH COLUMBIA DISTRICT

Rev. E. Eberhardt	1894-1905	Rev. R. Sheppard	1915-1926
	1909-1942	Rev. H. Tietjen	1915-1918
Rev. G. Franke	1895-1896	Rev. W. Single	1915-1919
Rev. E. Treu	1901-1903	Rev. R. Frick	1916-1919
Rev. J. Sillak	1901-	Rev. C. Thies	1916-1934
Rev. V. Gruber	1902-1905	Rev. J. C. Mueller	1917-1927
Rev. H. Wehmeyer	1904-1909	Rev. H. Mohr	1917-1918
Rev. J. Moebius	1904-1905	Rev. F. Mueller	1918-1927
	1907-1909	Rev. A. Halboth	1918-1919
Rev. W. Lussky	1904-1907	Rev. J. Resner	1918-1921
Rev. P. Schlemmer	1903-1904	Rev. C. Baumann	1918-1919
Rev. L. Walper	1905-1907	Rev. W. C. Eifert	1918-
Rev. F. Jahn	1905-1908	Rev. H. Boettcher	1918-1940
Rev. H. Reinitz	1905-1909	Rev. H. Hardt	1918-1920
Rev. G. Meyer	1905-1910	Rev. W. Krengel	1918-1922
Rev. W. Albrecht	1906-1908	Rev. A. Bolter	1918-1923
Rev. F. Falkenroth	1907-1910	Rev. W. Beltz	1918-1921
Rev. H. Schuetz	1908-1913	Rev. R. Holtzen	1919-1940
Rev. H. Arndt	1908-1911	Rev. R. Hildebrandt	1919-1925
Rev. F. Brockmann	1908-1911	Rev. W. Seidensticker	1919-1923
Rev. F. Schlee	1909-1914	Rev. H. Kuring	1919-1944
Rev. F. Janzow	1909-1916	Rev. E. Bertram	1919-1921
Rev. O. H. Schmidt	1909-1916	Rev. V. L. Meyer	1919-1945
Rev. E. T. Heyne	1909-1916	Rev. A. Krentz	1920-1922
Teacher A. Krieg	1909-1912	Rev. H. Kuehn	1920-1921
Rev. A. Rehwinkel	1910-1928	Rev. E. Jungemann	1920-1921
Rev. P. Koehneke	1910-1915	Rev. E. Krieger	1920-1927
Rev. O. Groth	1910-1914	Rev. C. Ullbricht	1920-1921
Teacher S. Richter	1909-1914	Rev. W. Walther	1920-1924
Teacher A. Braun	1910-1912	Rev. T. Ferber	1921-1923
Rev. M. Bertram	1911-1915	Rev. O. Thusius	1921-1923
Rev. A. Gerken	1911-1919	Rev. M. Rische	1921-1924
Rev. G. Griesse	1911-1920	Rev. G. Roehrs	1921-1925
Rev. J. Meyer	1911-1921	Rev. E. Wians	1921-1922
Rev. E. Brandt	1911-1918	Rev. C. Pfothenhauer	1921-1935
Rev. J. E. Herzer	1911-1929	Rev. A. Rolf	1921-1923
Teacher L. Dobring	1911-1915	Rev. F. Korbitz	1922-1923
Rev. E. Bertermann	1912-1915	Rev. A. Moore	1922-1923
Rev. S. Thies	1912-1920	Rev. J. Malkow	1922-1923
Rev. T. Dannenfeldt	1912-1914	Rev. C. Schmidt	1922-1924
Rev. C. Janzow	1912-	Rev. A. Deichmann	1922-1927
Teacher G. Leimer	1912-1914	Rev. R. Mosner	1922-1927
Rev. W. Wiltenburg	1913-1917	Rev. J. Marozik	1922-1926
Rev. A. Schwermann	1913-	Rev. C. Nissen	1922-1930
Rev. C. Fickenscher	1913-1916	Rev. G. Krueger	1922-1925
Rev. E. Neils	1913-1914	Rev. L. Faulstich	1922-1923
Rev. W. Fechner	1913-1919	Rev. W. Wachlin	1922-
Rev. B. Rafftesaeth	1914-1917	Rev. A. Behrendt	1922-1929
Rev. A. Mueller	1914-	Rev. M. Cohrs	1923-1929
Rev. H. Elling	1914-1921	Rev. W. W. Eifert	1923-1941
Rev. W. Stock	1914-1920	Rev. J. Herrmann	1923-1926
Rev. W. Spruth	1914-1919	Rev. J. Meichsner	1923-1927
Rev. C. Schultz	1914-1921	Rev. T. Waack	1923-1942

Rev. K. Wentzel.....	1923-1931	Teacher F. Hamann.....	1930-1936
Rev. H. Baumann.....	1923-1925	Rev. E. Biberdorf.....	1931-1944
Rev. W. Baepfer.....	1923-1935		1946-
Rev. W. Jording.....	1924-1927	Rev. V. Eichenlaub.....	1931-
Prof. J. Herreilers.....	1924-	Rev. H. Fry.....	1931-1943
Rev. W. Werning.....	1924-1935	Rev. V. Goebel.....	1931-1933
Rev. K. Ziegler.....	1924-1930	Rev. W. Hepting.....	1931-1936
Rev. B. Behrends.....	1924-	Rev. O. Schedler.....	1932-1941
Rev. A. Fenske.....	1924-	Rev. A. Miller.....	1933-
Rev. W. Luke.....	1924-1927	Rev. C. Baron.....	1933-
Teacher E. Golz.....	1924-1927	Rev. F. Gabert.....	1933-
Teacher A. Liske.....	1924-1926	Rev. T. Hoelter.....	1934-1940
Rev. K. Wentzlaff.....	1925-1927	Rev. H. Kritsch.....	1934-
Rev. A. Appelt.....	1925-	Rev. A. Reiner.....	1934-
Rev. M. Riedel.....	1926-1942	Rev. T. Folkmann.....	1934-
Rev. L. Menking.....	1926-1927	Rev. L. Liske.....	1935-
Rev. E. Saleska.....	1926-1930	Rev. A. Plunz.....	1935-1938
Rev. E. Schmidt.....	1926-1929	Rev. F. Ulmer.....	1935-
Rev. A. Trinklein.....	1926-1931	Rev. G. Plato.....	1935-1945
Rev. E. Wildgrube.....	1926-	Rev. W. Doeling.....	1936-1945
Rev. W. Raedeke.....	1927-	Rev. A. Krahenbil.....	1936-1945
Rev. W. Baumgaertner.....	1927-1927	Rev. A. Gehring.....	1937-
Rev. F. Duensing.....	1927-1930	Rev. P. Fry.....	1938-1940
Rev. E. Hinrichs.....	1927-1930	Rev. C. Hennig.....	1938-
Rev. W. Kautz.....	1927-1930	Rev. H. Merklinger.....	1938-
Rev. C. Klewer.....	1927-	Rev. A. Maschmeyer.....	1938-
Rev. H. Lubeck.....	1927-1930	Rev. H. Hafner.....	1939-1942
Rev. R. Luening.....	1927-1934	Rev. W. Kruger.....	1939-1945
Rev. E. Neben.....	1927-1945	Teacher A. Wied.....	1939-1943
Rev. J. Ohlinger.....	1927-	Rev. A. Riep.....	1940-
Rev. V. Ostermann.....	1927-1930	Rev. H. Schaan.....	1940-
Rev. G. Raedeke.....	1927-	Rev. E. Steinhorst.....	1940-1942
Teacher P. Enders.....	1927-1946	Rev. A. Enders.....	1941-1946
Teacher W. Rosnau.....	1927-	Rev. E. Fox.....	1941-
Rev. O. Eifert.....	1928-1929	Rev. C. Seegers.....	1941-1944
Rev. P. Natzke.....	1928-1931	Rev. H. Huth.....	1942-1943
Rev. F. Pfothenhauer.....	1928-1933	Rev. L. Gabert.....	1942-
Rev. A. Raduenz.....	1928-	Rev. E. Pearce.....	1942-1946
Rev. E. Spaude.....	1928-1929	Rev. W. Schienbein.....	1942-
Rev. W. Zersen.....	1928-1938	Rev. R. Schwermann.....	1942-
Rev. A. Guebert.....	1928-	Rev. C. Beiderwieden.....	1943-
Rev. A. Wilkening.....	1928-1931	Rev. D. Lentz.....	1943-
Teacher M. Mundt.....	1928-1931	Rev. A. Wessler.....	1943-1944
Rev. C. Baase.....	1929-	Rev. L. Jones.....	1943-1945
Rev. J. Kuring.....	1930-	Rev. J. Hennig.....	1944-
Rev. A. Haake.....	1930-1941	Rev. E. Rehwaldr.....	1945-
Rev. H. Hennig.....	1930-1942	Rev. A. Krueger.....	1945-1946
Rev. E. Hopka.....	1930-1942	Rev. A. Bickel.....	1945-
Rev. A. Meitler.....	1930-1936	Rev. R. Hamp.....	1945-
Rev. P. Unterschultz.....	1930-	Rev. J. Frese.....	1945-
Rev. E. Zschoche.....	1930-1933	Prof. H. F. Witte.....	1945-

A total of 205 men labored in the district for an aggregate of approximately 1,580 man-years.







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